



messing about in **BOATS**

Volume 23 - Number 10

October 1, 2005

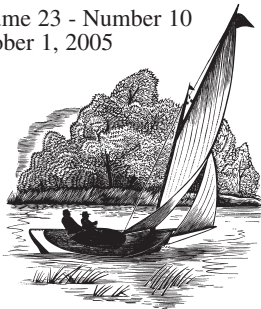
Special Features This Issue
"Looping the Loop" - "Hot Rod Trip to the Gator Hole"
"New Zealand's Hamilton Jet Boats" - "Squalicorax"



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Commentary...

Bob Hicks, Editor



When you read this we will be well into fall with winter looming up not too far off. But I am writing this on August 30, the day before this issue goes to the printer. We have to work a month ahead in hopes of getting you your magazines around the date that is on the cover. This schedule gives the printer two weeks to get the magazine printed and mailed and the postal service two weeks to deliver it. As many of you have experienced, particularly this summer, this doesn't always succeed. The usual delay is in the mail, the 3rd Class Bulk mail is last to be handled anywhere along its route to you, and we even hear from readers who get two issues the same day, one mailed a month before, the other two weeks. Where the tardy one spent the time, I do not know. At least it eventually got there.

The end of August is the slowest time of the year around here. Stories, letters, and classified ads from you have pretty well stopped coming in as most of you have been out somewhere on the water, and some advertisers also seem to have forgone office hours judging from the slowdown in ad bill payments. But, it appears to be a seasonal thing, it happens every year so I do not despair, I trust that it will have picked up again now that you are mostly back ashore and readying for whatever you plan to do this winter messing about in boats ashore. With summer behind you, this is a good time to send me your stories of what transpired.

As I dip into the files for stories and find the pickings slim or even non-existent in some categories, I realize I have to get to work myself and round up some news that will be of interest. As long as there is sufficient content of acceptable variety I do not undertake to do many stories, except in those instances where I feel strongly that a subject needs telling. In the early years I did much of the reporting and writing until you discovered that your stories were welcome and seemed to interest fellow readers and began sending them along. This made it possible to bring you a far wider range of subjects in every issue than I could generate on my own.

As your contributions grew in number over these 22 years I could slack off on the reporting end and focus on the editorial part. And even then my job became mostly organizing each issue to cover a wide range of subjects and then carrying on with its production. I limit my editing of any article so as to preserve its nature as you wrote it. Editing stories using a "style book," as do some magazines, results, in my view, in homogenized writing, it all sounds the same. I do not wish your writing to sound like mine. The eclectic mix of subjects and writing styles you supply enlivens the magazine in my view.

Our "season" is opposite to that of our subject matter, we are busiest in winter and slowest in summer. November and December bring in by far the largest number of subscriptions. By these months the story files are filling up again and it is possible to put together what I think of as well rounded issues featuring a wide variety of topics.

As I fill requests for copies of back issues or copies of articles published in bygone issues, usually from persons who have viewed our index on our (gasp) website, I am reminded of just how much material has appeared on our pages. The index printout covers almost 200 pages, organized by subjects. A retired reader, Dave Thibodeau, put it together for us in 1999. It covers 375 issues, 1983 through 1998. Since then we have published 164 more issues which are, as yet, not indexed. I do not have the time nor inclination to undertake this task, just keeping up with current issues every two weeks is enough for me to do.

Yes, over 22 years of chronicling how we mess about in boats has compiled an enormous archive of stories of the experiencing of everyday pleasures to be found messing about in small boats. The subject is an open ended one, every story is different. As I now look ahead to our busy season through the long winter months I invite you to keep your stories coming. Collectively they seem to hit the mark for 4,000+ subscribers

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On the Cover...

Speedboats on the cover? Yeah, but there's a reason, these are unique boats from New Zealand in the '50s. Ian Walker tells us about them in this issue.

Every year Roger Crawford hosts the Summer Solstice Regatta for any and all of the over 350 Melonseed skiffs that he has hand built and shipped across the country. As with most specialty clubs, we Melonheads are a tight knit group. The attendance of these Massachusetts South Shore events tends to be by boat owners within a hundred miles of the shop on Ferry St., Humarock, Massachusetts. But we are a rather eccentric and even obsessive group, so one of our owners drove in from the wilds of South Dakota to sail for two days and party hearty Friday and Saturday nights. The Captain and I may be the craziest of all, having done the 2003 Solstice Regatta, then driven halfway across the country to take in the Midwest Melonseed Regatta at Green Lake, Wisconsin.

This year the participants were mostly local New Englanders, the "from away" award went to an owner from Montreal, Canada. The location for the sailing was further afield then years past. We took 15 boats down to Padanaram (South Dartmouth) on Buzzards Bay, Massachusetts, and rowed out under the long bridge which separates the town launching ramp from the inner harbor. Once in the harbor proper, we beached and rigged the boats to sail out along the southern stretch of coastline between granite reefs and rocky fingers. The wind was a brisk 12-15kts, with gusts to 20kts and better. We were constrained to follow the coastline because the wind-churned swells were more than these exceptionally low freeboard craft could cope with comfortably.

The water on this southern shore of Massachusetts is warmer than here at home on the North Shore. I'd have had a severe case of hypothermia had we done this trip off Plum Island in mid-June. Even so, getting facefuls of warm seawater isn't a lot of fun after the first two or three exhilarating splashes. Glasses get salt-rimed and nasal passages feel like they are on fire if you inhale when hit face on. We beat along at a good clip, bounding over the main with the flotilla spreading out, then blending in closer together once past the scattered rocky outcroppings. Looked at from above our armada must resemble a school of darting fish.

We were at the mercy of the wind, which was a bit shifty that day. Constant readjustments to the course plotted in one's mind were made to avoid granite, other boats, and the ever-present lobster buoys. With each changing tack the wind and waves came at the human dodger sitting in front of the helmsman from a different quadrant. I was thoroughly soaked by the time we hauled out on the beach at Nonquit.

As always, wherever these sprit rigged craft haul out, lining up along a beach or marshy shore, they stop traffic and people come to investigate. When we received a visit from a couple of homeowners living up the strand from our beaching spot, I worried we were trespassing on some very exclusive real estate, so it was a pleasant surprise that the couple were interested in information about the boats and not asking us to leave. Nonquit has been protected by conservation easements so that beach front property is accessible to boaters without the often contentious interpretations of exactly where mean high and low tide marks fall, the legal area for public use.

The beach was studded with quartz stones. While wet, the pebbles looked like gems of great value, perhaps spilled from a



Window on the Water

By Chris Kaiser

Summer Solstice Regatta

wrecked galleon. Once dry and sprinkled around the fern garden at home they are merely reminders of a new discovery... let it rain or turn the hose onto their smooth surfaces and thoughts of Aladdin's treasure caves come to mind.

As we returned to the launch ramp several of us couldn't resist the chance to "buzz" the famed Concordia Boatworks; like little ducklings following papa duck, we sailed in behind Roger, did a few turns within the confines of the yard's launching area, and zipped out again. Finally we had to head home to get ready for the evening event. A live band under the massive wood beamed pavilion at the U.S. Air Force's 4th Cliff Recreation Facility made a perfect end to the day. The wind up on the cliff was strong enough to discourage all but the most aggressive mosquitoes.

Watching the sunset from there is always a treat. Watching the wind act on the water below made us all glad to be on solid ground. What had been 10-12 knots earlier had picked up to a steady 20 knots out of the southwest. The whitecaps had whitecaps on them, lobster boats returning to port were bobbling about like inner tubes in a water park wave pool.

Saturday the wind was still fresh though perhaps only 10 knots and the sunshine was abundant. We gained another boat to make an even 16 craft to launch from the outer edge of Powder Point Bridge back on Duxbury Bay. By trailer launching the boats and ferrying crew back from an offsite parking area, we were able to accommodate everyone and leave parking for other users as well. Duxbury Bay is a favorite haunt of the Melonheads, we've launched from the town dock in past years and have threaded our way out into the harbor through one of the tightest mooring fields I've ever seen. Launching at the bridge allowed us to run down the harbor alongside the great swath of sand dunes making up Powder Point which ends at The Gurnet beyond.

We left on a rising tide, making it a close reach for 2-1/2 miles, with winds nothing like the previous day's trip. Inside the sheltering arm of the beach we had a long, slow sail into a hidden creek. We surprised a pair of ladies kayaking out of the creek and

displaced several late arriving power boaters who like to fish the oxbow where we hauled out onto the marsh. With the tide still coming in, all that was visible was a ghostly line of sails meandering along in the tall grass.

No sooner were all boats secured, Roger was the first to scream "Geronimo" and dive in for a swim. Most of us followed and enjoyed the warm water, if not the squishy bottom that hid clumps of oysters growing on rocks. The day was another perfect example of messing about, in a group, in this instance, having simple fun in a small uncomplicated craft. Out in the harbor we witnessed frenzied races between the big inflated orange triangle course markers, I doubt any of our group had a moment of envy for those tacticians or their crews. Instead, we were lounging about, eating a variety of well prepared lunches. Not a frenzied body among us.

The trip back was another close reach of about three miles to the town ramp and yacht club. It was perhaps more tactically challenging, allowing us to check out the bevy of Marshal catboats that call this harbor home. Watching these boats carry so much sail is at once wonderful and awe inspiring. Having sailed in one a few times, I know it is NOT the boat for me. The Melonseed has spoiled me for any other sailing. That being said, I won't refuse an offer to sail on a larger craft in the Caribbean some winter if anyone needs extra crew.

Aeolus favored us and provided the best breeze of the day as we set out to cross the last mile to the starting beach. We had a great and happy romp downwind, past lovely old sea captains' homes lining the northern end of the harbor. Arriving at the shop we got ready for the party, using the showers out on the deck. What is it about removing salt crust in an outdoor shower that makes you feel cleaner, your skin softer than any expensive spa treatment?

We had time to test out Roger's newest invention, his Gunning Dory. It is a wonder of lightweight, well balanced rowing station placements. The Captain liked the new boat so well he took it out twice. I'm a forward-looking person and have never enjoyed rowing backwards to where I'm going. If Roger offers to fit this boat out with a forward rowing device I'll try it again. Despite my distaste for not being able to see where I'm headed, the boat flew across the water. It makes my 16' Swampscott dory (also built by Roger) feel like a Nantucket Whaler.

The Regatta was a blast, but much wetter than in previous years due to the wind and wave conditions. We might have stayed drier by choosing different areas in which to sail or by using different tacks, but in the end it was all about having fun and going as fast as we could safely. "Fun and fast" can be translated as "damp to totally sodden." This was a weekend when we were more watermelon than Melonseed!

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according to the blessings of the
Lord" (Deut 16:16)**

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From the Journals of Constant Waterman

By Matthew Goldman

How shall I tell of Autumn on the River? Can mere wordcraft depict the grace of an early October morning from my canoe? Now I am drifting dawnwards, I shoved off from my Island as the day woke on the water. The inside of my aluminum boat is agleam with condensation. I am warmly clothed. And then a glimpse, a glimmering, as the valley breaks to a veiled sun amidst a silver mist. I can scarcely see past the prow of my canoe. For half an hour I think there will not be anything ever again save only mist.

An edge of the veil lifts. I am not alone. Twenty yards east waits an oil tanker, throbbing, in the channel, waiting to cross a river he can't quite see. First there is only a ghost of the superstructure, then the red and white of the pilot house, then a 150' of black and gleaming steel. As I glide by, an easy hail away, I touch my cap and her taciturn skipper nods his acknowledgement. Then, once more I am clear and on my own. I will meet nobody else between here and the Landing.

The fog burns away, there is not a bit of breeze, there is but the spiritual glow of emboldened sun. Every last whisp of fog is burned away. It is gone and the light reveals the sensuous hills on the east bank and the bottom land on the west. Between the two, a steely, sinuous, great, long, moving mirror as a dozen colors leap from the wounded hillside into the water.

The tanker's skipper empowers his engines and shatters the dawn with a warning from his horn. He follows the channel across the River, continues to crawl upstream. A mile more and he blows his horn for the old swing bridge to open. Then he is gone. The dawn is so still I can hear a fish jump a thousand yards downstream. Ahead, the ferryboat sleeps in her sturdy slip. I pass the Landing, it is much too early to think about going to work, to be walled in by wood no longer living. I turn my diminutive craft into the Creek and work my way slowly against the tide and current.

The Creek is muddy and 6' deep and 40' across. Its slippery banks boast broken trees and tangled, strangling vines to the water's edge. Rose and briar and bittersweet suffice to keep a Waterman from the shore. But the birds adore it. Now they are busy proclaiming another day. I paddle with power, I scarcely disturb the surface. The kingfisher clatters by me, swoops around the bend, and disappears. A snapping turtle slithers into the stream. Now I am past the Woods and amid the Marsh. Amid the cattails, pickerel weed, wild rice. And, all about, the too intrusive phragmites, the pampas grass.

A monstrous dragonfly dries his wings in the sun. Very soon will his little season be over. The Creek has narrowed to half its former width, it now fans out, it divides into lesser creeks which twine towards shore to be fed by fresh water streams. This particular Marsh is small, perhaps half a mile across, a sanctuary within a ring of woods and houses and road. From my canoe the cattails hem me in. I am content. The sun has dried the mist from my canoe. It has dried the four long wings of the dragonfly.

Now a pair of swans and two brown cygnets paddle down a narrow passage and vanish. During nesting time the aggressive cob will challenge any intruder. He will ramp up in the water and beat his wings and, if ignored, will stoop upon canoeists and batter them. Now he is wary and has no wish to be seen. He and his family would lief be left to forage uninterrupted. These are not harbor swans who go from boat to boat demanding breakfast. These are wild creatures like myself.



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Sailing action.

2nd Annual Rockland *Red Jacket* Youth Regatta

By Trisha Badger

Atlantic Challenge's Community Sailing Program hosted the second annual Rockland Red Jacket Youth Regatta July 31st on Rockland, Maine's harbor. The regatta is named in honor of the fast and famous Rockland-built clipper ship *Red Jacket*, launched in 1853 near the current location of Atlantic Challenge. *Red Jacket* set sailing records that stand to this day and was widely known for her beautiful craftsmanship.

Twenty-eight sailors from four local sailing programs completed six races while enjoying an afternoon of sunny skies, cool breezes, and friendly competition fostering the sportsmanship, teamwork, and sailing skills that racing develops in youth sailors. Twelve sailors raced in single person 8' JY Club Trainers and another 16 sailed two-person 15' 420s in shifty 5-10mph southerly winds that required exercising sailing skills to achieve sailing speeds.

Atlantic Challenge, St. George Community Sailing, North Haven Casino Sailing, and Camden Yacht Club participated in this volunteer-run event sponsored by Maine Cat Catamarans and Maritime Energy. Poland Spring provided water for the competitors and the Rockland Yacht Club provided the race committee. Special thanks to Warner Graphics for providing prints of the

Clipper Ship *Red Jacket* for the event sponsors.

"Atlantic Challenge is glad this growing regatta brings sailors from different programs together and gives local youth the opportunity to put their sailing skills to the test in their own Rockland Harbor," said KC Heyniger, AC's Waterfront Coordinator. "We are very thankful for all the volunteers, local

supporters, and visiting clubs that came together to make such a wonderful event possible for all the sailors," he added.

Throughout its 33-year history of boat-building and sailing programs, Atlantic Challenge continues this heritage by inspiring personal growth through craftsmanship, community and traditions of the sea.

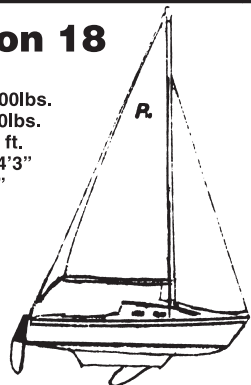
It was a great day for Rockland youth sailing.



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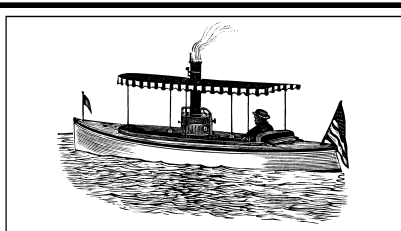
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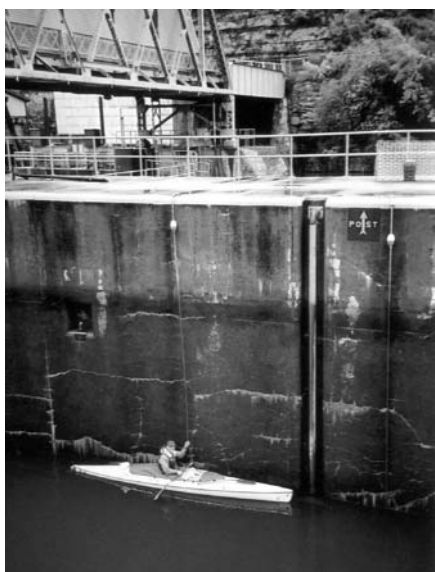
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Going up in Lock #12.
Henry Hudson's Half Moon in Albany.



Looping The Loop Lake Champlain New York City – Boston May/June 2005

By Reinhard Zollitsch

Six years ago, on May 23, 1999, Nancy and I made the long trek from Maine to the southern tip of Lake Champlain, the traditional Finch and Chubb Inn, to be exact, at Lock #12 Marina in the small town of Whitehall, New York. I had asked her whether she would be interested in “getting away from it all for a couple of days” to celebrate our 35th wedding anniversary. But she caught on fast, asking whether that outing would by any chance involve my solo sea canoe – and yes, it did.

The following day that year, soon after sunrise, I was off on my 1,000-miler up north to the Richelieu River and the St. Lawrence and on to Quebec City and beyond, around the Gaspé Peninsula into the Gulf of St. Lawrence and back to New Brunswick, Canada (see *MAIB* May 1 to June 15, 2000). The following years took me along New Brunswick's shores, around Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia, as well as along the shores of the Bay of Fundy from St. John back to Machias, Maine. I had already done the stretch from Boston to Portland and the Maine Island Trail from Portland to Machias in previous years (1996/97) and I suddenly noticed that the New England states and the Canadian Maritimes form an island, so to speak, not a clear one that jumps out at you on the map, but you can boat around that big hunk of land even with a sail or power boat.

I realized that I was about 500 miles short of completing the loop. All I had to do was close the gap between Boston, Massachusetts, and Whitehall, New York. Since this was not an area I would have chosen to paddle, and since I resent being pressured to do something which is not of my own choosing, I hesitated, procrastinated, made excuses, and postponed that trip, and did my trip on the Baltic Sea along German shores from Denmark to Poland instead, which I had always wanted to do since I was a little boy growing up along those north European waters.

But then I read the Howard Blackburn story (see info), the indomitable dory fisherman from Gloucester, Massachusetts, who later in life (1902/03) decided to sail a boat up the Hudson, through the barge canal system, into the Great Lakes to Chicago and from there down the Illinois River into the Mississippi, the Gulf of Mexico, and back on the Atlantic. He got hooked on crossing the Atlantic in ever smaller boats and circumnavigating big chunks of land that do not look like islands at first sight. He wanted to prove that a large chunk of the U.S. was an island. His trip in turn recently inspired Nat Stone to row more or less the same route in 1999/2000 and write it up in *On the Water* (see info).

I suddenly felt motivated again by the good company and decided to complete my circumnavigation. At the top of the Hudson, however, my loop turned right instead of left, forever right, describing an almost 4,000-mile-long clockwise circle around my new-found world in New England and the Maritimes. I, too, would end up at the same place I started. But since I had broken up my

trip over a number of years, I now also had the choice of direction for my last stint. I had gone clockwise from Lake Champlain all the way to Machias, Maine. But since I had done the stretch from Boston to Machias in a counter-clockwise direction, due to the prevailing winds and the tidal flow, I decided to do my 2005 trip also in a counterclockwise direction and hope that “the force would be with me” again; i.e., the flow of the Hudson and the prevailing SW wind for the rest of the stretch. Hitching a ride on the ebb tide, whenever possible, would also be nicer than bucking flood tides.

The Send-Off

So there we were in Whitehall again, on May 23, 2005, six years to the day from our earlier trek starting off my eventual circumnavigation, enjoying a great anniversary/send-off dinner, thinking sweet thoughts while at the same time going through the check list for three weeks. I was again going solo and totally unassisted, except for the put-in in Whitehall and eventual pick-up on Revere Beach in Boston. I had all my own camping gear, charts and info, and food and supplies for three weeks in watertight bags, as well as five gallons of water. I abhor stopping at stores along the way to pick up a soda here or a munchy bar there, going to a motel for a shower and a soft level bed, or visiting friends along the way to chat. I had absorbed enough history and information of this area ahead of time that I had enough to think about, to look for, and to do so I would not be lonely or bored. I also packed a bunch of fun readers in case I needed to take my mind off and relax. I was ready, as always, and very thankful to Nancy for letting me go and making these trips possible for me. Thanks, Nancy, you are the greatest!

The Barge Canal System

New York State has an elaborate barge canal system which was instrumental in the westward move of early settlers, the Erie Canal being the best known. The Champlain Canal was built between 1817-1823, around the same time as the Erie Canal, and ultimately connected New York City with Montreal and Quebec on the St. Lawrence (Canada). From Lake Champlain barges, but now mostly pleasure crafts, can take the Richelieu River and the Chambly Canal (with nine locks) north into the St. Lawrence, or go south through the Champlain Canal (with 12 locks) to Troy, into the tidal Hudson River, and down to New York City.

The canals are a fascinating story in themselves, run today by the very efficient and helpful New York York Canal System (see info; also check Peter Lourie, *River of Mountains*). Their website gives you all the info you need, hours of operation, fees and permits, VHF channels, etc. I especially liked that they were free of charge for hand-powered vessels, and yet I was always treated like a “real vessel” with a lot of courtesy, as well as curiosity about my trip. I had many an interesting chat with the various lock keepers. They pass on the word to the next lock, estimate your speed, and, if possible, have the lock ready for you. You go up or down between 10'-20' each time, with 2-14 miles in between locks. There is no lock #10, by the way. It was never built because it turned out it was not needed, but the original numbering was never changed. I found the whole thing a bit strange.

The first three locks, by the way, lift you up to the height of land at Glen's Falls and the Feeder Canal, all the other locks then drop you down to almost sea level at Troy. The first 25 miles of the more or less straight dug canal have the character of a small wooded river. At Fort Edward, after lock # 7, the canal joins the upper Hudson River and becomes more irregular. While the Hudson River does its thing, including failing over ledge drops and power dams, boats are channeled into small side arms to the next lock system. Those spots would not be too kind towards speeding, drowsy, inattentive, intoxicated motorboat captains who, all too often I am told, are guilty of all the above and pay for it dearly.

The Mighty River And Henry Hudson

Just below lock #1 at Mechanicville the Erie Canal branches off (river right). Suddenly the traffic increases, but even more so after the last set of locks, the Federal Locks at Troy. There the character of the river changes abruptly. The two big cities, Troy and Albany, have miles of quays and industry which bring oceangoing boats and barges almost 160 miles upriver. It becomes a working river with significant commercial traffic stream which small boaters should stay out of at all times.

What boaters will notice immediately is that the river itself takes on a new character. From Troy on the Hudson is different from all other rivers that flow to the sea. The Hudson does not flow at all; i.e., there is no real drop to the sea, unlike the Rhine, a frequent comparison with the Hudson. Troy is practically already at sea level. Since the last ice age this stretch of the old Hudson, which extended far out into the Atlantic, was flooded and what we have these days is one long tidal arm, a fjord if you want, or better, a "drowned river." It "flows" both ways as the Native American name Muhheakunnuk implies, with the ebb tide being slightly stronger (in places 5 knots max.), having the added river and rainwater to carry to the sea. If you do not pay attention to the cycle of the tide you may see your tent washed off a beach by the incoming tide or find yourself stranded in a field of mud when the waters recede. The Hudson from Troy to The Battery is an ocean arm, a tidal estuary, and should be treated as such; i.e., you have to think ocean and tides, not river, when you go down it (mean range of tides for the two places: 4.7' and 4.5').

When Henry Hudson arrived here late in September of 1609 in his search for a sea-way to China (his search north of Russia that same year failed, like all his previous attempts along American shores), he thought he had finally found the by then legendary "Northwest Passage." I feel sailors had talked about it for so long that its existence was almost a fact, it just had to be found.

I could see and feel what Hudson must have thought when he entered this great river. Here is a deep and often wide tidal arm cutting through mountain ranges, maybe even an entire continent. In those days the American continent was considered a very narrow affair, maybe a bit wider than Florida. So it was very possible this was it. This had to be it, since he could not afford another failure.

There was only one thing missing in his equation, which I would have pointed out to

him had I been his assistant: where is the westing? This river was truly a Great River, a North River as it was known for a long time after Hudson, but no northwest passage or new seaway to the Orient.

After sailing straight north for about 150 miles, an awfully long way in those days and those awkward sailboats, he finally had to concede it was only another river. And as I was thinking this, around the modern city of Albany where Hudson had moored his 84' ship, the *Half Moon*, there she was. The sides were still scraped up from the Russian ice (or was it from this year's ice melt on the Hudson). It was the *Half Moon* all right, it said so on the stem.

I was so excited to see the boat, a replica, of course. And was I ever glad that the first high tide on the river was at 6am. This meant I would be able to make my planned 25 miles per day early each day before the wind springs up and with the help of the ebbing fide. I lucked out completely.

I needed that because the weather the first week of my trip was everything but vacation weather. Night temperatures were in the low 40s, daytime temps in the low 50s. There was heavy rain almost every night and showers and drizzle during the days - real Gore-Tex, polypropylene, and polar fleece weather. It felt more like Nova Scotia than New York. All I was missing were the ubiquitous fog and ocean swells crashing on shore and the outlying rocks. I'll take it.

Brief Island Solitude With Geese

My fifth night out found me on Esopus Island, between Kingston and Poughkeepsie, as the tide was running out again. The lead gander of a group of Canada geese objected at first, but eventually accepted me in my granite gray tent above the high tide line while he and his flock continued to pull out on the lower tidal part of that minimal pebble beach.

Hudson River The American Rhine?

That afternoon I had passed by Rhine Cliff and I thought to myself how unlike the German Rhine this looked. There were no castles, no churches, no vineyards, no mystical Lorelei creature sitting on top of the cliff tirelessly combing her golden hair, not even a ledge for skippers to founder on, but worst of all there were no little Weinstuben, there was no smell of Bratwurst, Kraut, and German fries, and no oompah music - just kidding.

The only castle I saw came a bit later, Bannerman Castle on tiny Pollepel Island, a tad south of Newburgh/Beacon or just before the river's break through the Hudson Highlands mountain range at Storm King Mountain. What a sight! I had to overnight there, I thought when I planned my trip in the cold of a Maine winter, and I did. Between 1901 and 1918 Frank Bannerman, who made his money hawking military surplus from the



Catskill Mountains with barge.
Bannerman Castle.





Hudson Highlands with Storm King Mountain.



Pete Seeger's Clearwater sloop.

Bridges, the old and the new.



1898 Spanish-American War, built the castle of his dreams for a warehouse, without real architectural plans. It is already unsafe to enter and is collapsing and looks much older than it really is. It portrays a false sense of history. It is clearly a product of a nostalgia attack. It is totally out of place, if you ask me or any European, it's a fake, but great for tourism and pictures. I am guilty, too (I took at least 10 slides).

No, the Hudson is not "The American Rhine." Why should it be? It has its own unique and wonderful character.

The Hudson Highlands

Aside from Bannerman Castle, Denning Point peninsula looked ideal to take in the larger geological view of this area and, believe me, this is a spectacular spot in every sense. The river is almost stopped up behind the ridge of the Hudson Highlands, a mountain range filling the entire horizon. On river right is the big chunk of Storm King Mountain, and on river left a string of almost equal impressive peaks. It must be one of the most photographed areas around. I was so glad to see it maintained in its natural beauty as a large state park and not carved up by developers.

A bit further down the entire bottleneck makes two tight 90 degree turns at Worlds End (I love descriptive names like that), overlooked by the impressive buildings of the U.S. Military Academy West Point. It felt good paddling with a strong ebb tide. This corner could stop you dead in your tracks with an opposing tide.

The HRWA

I was glad to be able to pitch my tent on Denning Point. Thanks to the Hudson River Greenway as well as the Hudson River Watertrail Association, two all-volunteer non-profit organizations (see info), it is now an approved campsite for river travelers. The HRWA has been instrumental in establishing a water trail like our Maine Island Trail, down the entire tidal segment of the Hudson River. Since 1992 they have been tirelessly negotiating launching and landing sites for small boaters and have put out a very informative and useful Hudson River Trail Guide.

Each year they celebrate their accomplishment and at the same time promote their idea of public use of the big river with an annual paddle trip down the entire tidal stretch of the Hudson. This year's trip was planned for July 8-17, which was a bit too late in the season for me and also too slow, but I am sure the participants will have fun and get their word out about the mighty Hudson as well as get a good workout.

Clearwater

I was in a great mood bounding through World's End, also since the sun had finally come out. But then I lucked out yet again. Just below West Point I noticed a big old wooden sloop. I knew right away that had to be Pete Seeger's *Clearwater*, the symbol of the clean-up effort of the Hudson River started in the late '60s. When I clicked my pictures for this article, heads popped up over the side and I was soon involved in a very animated talk with the very enthused crew of five young college kids. They were delighted to hear that their word had gotten out and that I knew all about the boat, Pete, and their commitment. In return they were impressed

to hear about my big venture and that I, too, had sailed on a small two-masted schooner across the Atlantic as watch captain.

The Hudson River surely has come a long way. People used to say you smell the river before you see it. Not any more, although there is still lots to be done, as I found out from the Riverkeeper patrolling the Hudson in a Maine lobster boat. I liked that. Now you see lots of Canada geese with their gangly goslings in tow, ducks, cormorants, some ospreys, and occasionally even a bald eagle. On shore I heard cardinals, Baltimore orioles, and mockingbirds as well as a variety of warblers. It was everything but a "silent spring" along this major north-south flyway.

Bridges and Trains

I have always liked bridges and trains. I grew up in a small town on the Kiel Canal in Germany, with several different types of bridges and lots of trains. I see bridges as the engineering marvels of their respective times, and the Hudson can certainly write its own chapter in a history book for engineering students. And as the river widens one can see how engineers solved the problem of height, width, and span with ever new designs and materials.

Suspension bridges are my favorites since they so gracefully and seemingly effortlessly span the river. What is more important is that they connect people and towns and allow commerce and travel. I was fascinated and taken back to my youth, hearing train whistles at all times of the day and night. There were long 50-car freight trains chugging along the west bank of the river and sleek, clean, and fast five to nine car passenger AMTRAK trains on the east bank, New York City bound.

Between bridges, or where the river widens, ferries supplied the link. Even those have changed drastically and now tear across surface of the water at an amazing speed. Those catamaran ferries, I noticed, throw a wicked pressure wake. Small boaters beware!

Ocean-Like Bays

After going under the Bear Mountain bridge near Peekskill, the river suddenly widens significantly. Three miles wide and at least twice as long, Haverstraw Bay looks more like Penobscot Bay to me than a river. Only the islands were missing, but instead there is a very beautiful peninsula jutting into it, looking straight south to the mighty Tappan Zee Bridge. Again, thanks to the HRWA there is a legal campsite for small boaters on the very tip of Tellers Point, marked by a HRWA pole marker. Thanks, I needed that! It was my seventh night out and it was Memorial Day. The boat traffic had increased a hundredfold. There were some sailboats but mostly big and fast powerboats, all the way up to ocean racing cats.

Since I had too much gear I decided to chance camping along the minimal beach rather than carry my gear up the bank to the official tenting areas. It was marginal at high tide, especially with all the boat traffic and the westerly wind suddenly whipping up at 20-25 knots. I had to fortify my tent with a breakwater of the biggest driftwood logs I could find and it worked, but barely. I knew I had the option of moving to higher ground at any time. I was ready and enjoyed watching people enjoying the mighty river.

Meeting the Spitting Devil at the Mouth of the Harlem River

Teller Point was a perfect jump-off point to my next stop, the mouth of the Harlem River, which is also known by its Dutch name Spuyten Duyvil, or spitting devil (it spits out a strong ebb tide into the mighty Hudson).

This was my 200-mile marker, my eighth overnight, and I had everything planned in advance to pull out at the Columbia University Rowing Club. I had e-mailed two friends of mine, the former head coach and Olympic gold medalist, as well as the major donor of the boathouse, way in advance, asking them to ask permission for me to pitch my minimal tent in the most out-of-the-way place on their grounds. This spot was important, not only because it is hard to find a camping ground in downtown New York, but also because I had to set myself up very carefully for the next day's run through the infamous Hell Gate, where the Harlem and East River gush into Long Island Sound, a very tricky spot.

Everything looked great except for the extensive mud flats engulfing half of the rowing docks. Nobody was there except for

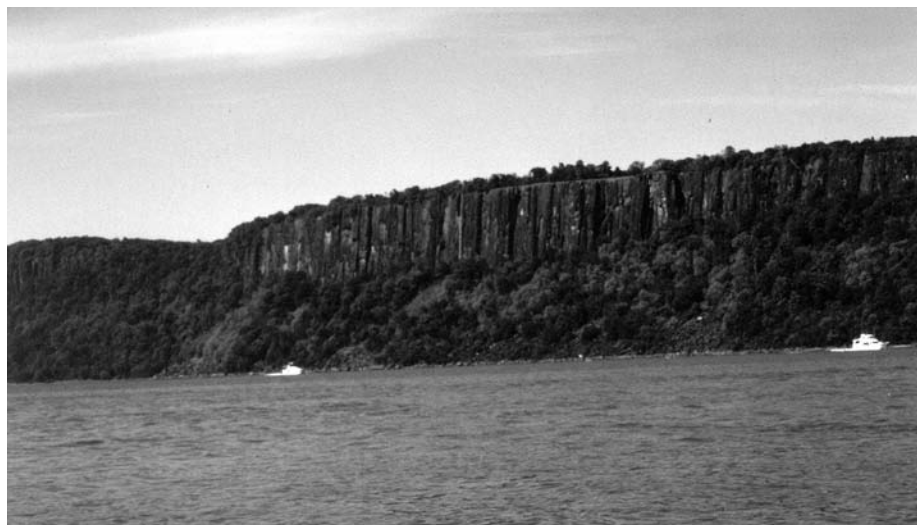
some Canada geese messing up the docks, and eventually a grounds person and a security guard. I showed them my letters, still no problem. I was even given the combination to the washroom. I read some and studied the tides of the Harlem for tomorrow's run. While the Hudson and the East River flood north, the Harlem floods south. The flows of the Harlem and the East River meet at Hell Gate and then together press through the narrow gut into Long Island Sound. I would have to be down there about 5am, which meant leaving about two hours earlier, at about 3am in the dark. Could I do it?

And while I was halfway through my Dinty Moore beef stew, the present head coach showed up. It turned out he had not seen the e-mails; i.e., he had failed to retrieve them and he got all flustered and felt it was not up to him to give me permission to camp here. "If anything happens to you I might lose my job," he kept saying. At first I thought he was putting me on. Could I, who had gone solo on the ocean for almost 4000 miles without even the slightest mishap, slip on the goose droppings on the boat dock, break a leg, and sue Columbia University for all it is worth?



A tad too close at Teller Point, view from my tent.

The Palisades in New Jersey.



"You are kidding, aren't you?" I offered, but no, he wasn't. After a half-hearted attempt to contact a superior by phone, he decided he could not bear the responsibility on his own shoulders and threw me out. I could not believe being ousted by a phys ed coach, me being a Prof. Dr. from a sister university with credentials from a former coach and Olympic gold medalist and a major donor, whose name was on the boathouse in big letters. My ego as well as my planning skills were severely bruised.

"I have to leave in 10 minutes," he said bluntly, "and I want to see you pack up now." I knew then that I had met the "Spuyten Duyvil" in person. Arguing with small, inflexible, and scared people, I knew from years of experience, was useless, but I sternly objected to his "NOW" demand. I was in the middle of my meal, the high point of each day for me, and still had my fruit dessert coming. I would pack up when I was done

eating, I countered. He could check on me later. Under those circumstances I didn't even want to stay any more, but they would hear from me later, I promised. He just walked off, not knowing what to say to my partial refusal to leave now.

And while I was gulping down my stew, the huge letter "C" signifying the mighty academic institution of Columbia University on the ledge face on the opposite shore suddenly shrank and looked more like graffiti defacing a beautiful, natural ledge outcropping. I was thinking a lot of thoughts and came up with lots of clever and cutting phrases which I did not say then and cannot say now either. Maybe I can get away with it if I put it into the proper language of academe, I mused. Anyway, I would at least vent my frustration by calling the little "Spuyten Duyvil" a "formica urinans minor" – not to his face though. (You figure it out, "formica" meaning "ant").

That was my ultimate vengeance. I suddenly smiled again, enjoyed my fruit dessert, packed up, and was glad to get out of that mud hole where I was not welcome.

Hell Gate, Here I Come

This was easier said than done. The tide was ebbing hard and I could hardly make headway. After two miles, just before the next rowing club, I found a postal stamp sized beach with more or less level ground behind it. This had to do, and it did, without my being ousted again until my alarm went off at 3am. I slept fitfully. The din of the city never subsided. Trains, busses, and cars were running all night. What do you expect in the city that never sleeps? I had everything pre-packed and had memorized the next eight miles to Hell Gate, plus the next two into Long Island Sound. It was a dark night, illuminated only by street lights and buildings and a silver of a waning moon racing through dark storm clouds.

It was an extremely dramatic setting and me, lonely little Reinhard in his tiny sea canoe flushing down the Harlem with the flood tide. Once the span of a swing bridge on my side was blocked by construction barges and I had to hustle to get into the other lane. Otherwise I tried to be very visible, just right of center, so nobody could think I was sneaking up on anybody or anything. These are touchy days in the city and I had not cleared my passage with the Coast Guard or the police.

Two hours later the river swung right, then widened, and I saw two huge suspension bridges on my left, while I was practically running into the tiny island at the entrance to Hell Gate. This must be Mill Rock, I thought, and verified my position by turning on my flashlight for the first time. I was right on target - great! Now, what is the tide doing? Perfect! It was still flooding, maybe more than anticipated because I got here faster. I sized up the boils and headed straight across to the other shore, to Hallets Point, in order to avoid the rocks in front of Wards Island and the major current that would be slamming into this shore.

So I scooted into the eddy behind Hallets Point and flushed swiftly past the big power plant on the right hand shore, under the two huge bridges into the first bight around Rikers Island and eventually the Bronx-Whitestone and Throgsneck suspension bridges. I was in Long Island Sound for sure now. I felt elated and it was only 7am. Time for breakfast.

(To Be Continued)

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Dressed in her finery, an unidentified woman is seen rowing off Deer Isle, Maine, USA, Circa 1887.



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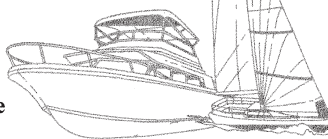
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Being a flooded cornfield sailor in Iowa, I remain bemused by the plethora of nautical equipment, phrases, events, and places that do not exist in my lexicon of English; nor, I am comfortable in assuring you, are they in the vocabulary of any self-respecting, corn loving, pig farming good old boy. *Messing About in Boats* is one of my loves and addictions, but too often I am confronted with words that escape me.

"Tillers" come from John Deere, are painted green, and keep the fields nice and neat. Oh, it might be argued that a Massy Ferguson or International tiller can be found on nondescript farms of the 120 acre variety. Why any fool would think of putting a good tiller in water is beyond me. The paint will come off and it will rust. Worse, it might not be fit for field duty.

The "spare the rod, spoil the child" Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary proclaimed that holding a "gudgeon" was a sin and probably a mortal one at that, meaning that we better be damn careful in our lives until confession, or the Sweat Box as we called it, on Saturday afternoon. In spite of a fully Catholic upbringing, I occasionally hold a gudgeon against some idiots, like those who talk on cell phones, drink coffee or pop, fiddle with the radio, read the paper, put on make-up, and smoke while attempting to drive. Frankly, I'd like to do more to those folks before they multiply than simply hold a gudgeon against them.

"Bucksport" I understand. We have always gone out in our pick-ups, had a few beers, shined flashlights into the woods, and hammered the heck out of some hapless deer. Yup, Bucksport. I personally like a good old fashioned 12-gauge shotgun, but my best buddy subscribes to the notion that nothing will out kill a 50-caliber rifle with night light scope, although I can't help but wonder how the night scope works while we have the flashlights in the buck's eyes.

Little brother Mike is a scuba fanatic who cannot survive a couple of months without a little trip to salt water, warm air, and good rum. He can indeed tell the difference between the Windward and Leeward Islands, has great tales of adventures in Bonaire, got lost in a deep water cavern in Cozumel (well, to be honest, it was me who got lost), and spent a gazillion dollars in the Caribbean. He thinks Jamaica is not worth a cold beer nor is "Bimini." You can imagine my chagrin when wonderful editor Bob Hicks tells me that he is printing a piece about installing a Bimini top. I am sure that he meant "Bikini" top and can not comprehend why such an article is appropriate in *MAIB*; however, I volunteer for such a task.

Either Bob or I have totally failed geography class. He, poor old demented but lovable chap, insists that Augusta, Norway, Rochester, Madison, and Lincoln are in Maine. My pity goes out to him when he states that Waterville is a quaint little village in the woods. Blarney! Waterville is a hick little town full of ruffians and drunks who hang out at Rainbow Gardens dance hall on Saturday nights. Believe me. I have been there, I have made passes at Waterville girls, and I have been beaten silly in Waterville. It is in Iowa.

My *MAIB* is replete with comments of "Falmouth." Harkening back to my days under the stern gaze of the nuns I used to confess falmouth. My mouth was about as fal as they come but nowhere near the verbiage

Kennebunkport And Other Rare Diseases

By Stephen D. (Doc) Regan

that flowed with such fluidity as from Charlie Bresnehan or Larry Murphy. I painfully remember being a falmouth with my dad once. He backhanded me so hard it knocked me all the way down the aisle of the City of Los Angeles passenger train. I NEVER used that phrase again, even when thinking of those cell phone, coffee drinking drivers.

Back up. The strong-willed Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary always had a "stern" gaze. It was not until I sailed my first dinghy that I discovered that stern meant rear, and those nuns certainly had eyes in the back of their heads hidden by that veil.

Poor old Bob Hicks and his cronies hail from New England and this explains all those weirdo names. First of all, I never could spell Massachusetts and can hardly pronounce it. What in the world is a Masschuseetes, Massachewsits, Mass.... forget it. Thank God for Iowa and civil, understandable, old fashioned, flag waving, common names. I live in Cedar Rapids. Now that is an easily understood concept. The city is on rapids of the Cedar River. None of this Narragansett, Skowhegan, Millinocket gobbledgeook. Our rivers are simple: Upper Iowa, Yellow, Red, Iowa, Cedar, Skunk, and Raccoon. Our lakes are Spirit Lake, Clear Lake, Rock Creek Lake, and the totally uniquely named Round Lake. Okoboji is an exception but all it has to offer is a lot of beer, an amusement park, and a ton of shops selling Okoboji University tee shirts. While it proffers no such college, the town's mayor took an Hs.D. (high school diploma).

What, pray tell, is a Penobscot, Pawcatuck, Willimantic? A Norwich is a terrier. My neighbor owns one which bit me in the tush recently. Connecticut is another off the wall kind of state like Massachewsits. What's with the "Lyme" stuff anyway? Limes go in my gin and tonic and I have no difficulties with that. Limes are green. Period. NOOOO. Conneecttecut must spell it with a "Y." They present to us Lyme, Old Lyme, East Lyme, North Lyme without bothering us with a West or South Lyme. Being a wild-eyed Irish Iowan, I have no understanding about all this directional stuff when it comes to names. Can't the New Englanders come up with original names? Have they no intelligence capable of generating unique city titles? Evidently not because we have Attleboro and North Attleboro; New Haven and North, East and West Haven. They are all near Mystic. Trust me, that all are rather mysterious and mystic.

Mom had her hip socket replaced but Mr. Hicks talks about "Woonsocket" which shows up in none of dad's pharmacy nor Grandpa's medical dictionaries. Miss Finlandia, my wife, bought me a wonderful recliner for my birthday. I watch the crop reports on TV in a very comfortable position from MY chair. I do not know much about upholstery but I am sure that it is Naugatuck and not real leather.

As much as Connecticut is probably a quaint little state with good sailing, it hardly shows up in my National Geographic Road Atlas. It shares a page with northern New

York but the goodly publishers felt sorry for the state and included a special block for a city map of Stamford, certainly Stamford misspelled but with Connecticut sailors, who knows. Anyway, StaMford has Holly Pond who I know was a stripper in San Diego in my Navy days. But what makes me feel sorry for Connecticut is that while they get a city enlargement, the map of StaMford shows a yellow block with the city name, Holly Pond (who deserves mention), Highway 76 and Interstate 95 bisected by #107 and a star noting the First Presbyterian Church. That's all. Well, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, has several Presbyterian churches, a boatload of Lutheran houses of worship, a bevy of Catholic Churches, and a Methodist church on every quadrant, but we are sprouting new Bible and Evangelical churches like dandelions in my yard.

When my cruising time comes I do believe that Connecticut will be a nice place to start. Somehow it sounds fun to sail from Sachem Head (I have been called a dumb head but am clueless about a sachem), past the Thimbles and Short Beach (Iowa's beaches are in pretty short supply, too), and land at Green Farms where I am confident I will feel comfortable and at home.

For some reason, launching from Wequeteadock, drifting past Noank, and landing at Giant's Neck does nothing for me, although a quickie at Pleasure Beach might make it worth my while. At least I am not trying to tell my poor old Mother that I am sailing down the Quinnipiac River. I couldn't pronounce it. And you thought Mississippi was hard to spell.

Clearly the Connecticut people are different from the New Yorkers, which can be seen as soon as you cross the border. New York folks named their towns using normal King's English nouns: Lake Carmel, Yorktown, Jefferson Valley, Pleasantville, Tarrytown, White Plains, Yonkers, and Harrison. No Lake Pocotopaug or Pachaug for New Yorkers. They are Americans.

All of this confoundment and confusion has made me hungry. Miss Unnaslahti of Saloranta herself left specific orders to make some stew for this evening's dining pleasure. I think of stew as pretty bland so I might add some "pintles" hoping she won't hold a "gudgeon" against me or deport me to "Insomnia," Connecticut. Worse, if I don't eat properly I might get "Kennebunkport," even though I am certain I was inoculated against that in the Navy. It happened right after a night with Holly Pond when I was out with Rocky Hill and the crew from South Glastonbury.



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I don't even remember what year it was, 1983, I believe. All I'm sure about is that it was the time of the truly biggest flood in years on the Cumberland River, late April or early May. My sister and mother both live in Hendersonville, Tennessee, near Old Hickory Lake. Shirley, my sister, agreed to drive my truck and trailer back to her house after the launch. I used the Old Lock 3 Access Area launching ramp, which is not a very good one due to its exposure to wind and two miles of open water above Old Hickory Dam (CRM 216.2)*.

The boat was an aluminum 18' 1979 MonArk Jon Boat Model 1860. I removed the middle seat and built a cabin that was a 2"x2" and plywood walk-through affair that looked like two tables in the center of the boat. It had drop-down sides and door tarps, an aluminum cover for the roof walk-through, and two 30" wide full-length cabin bunks. Flooring of 1/2" plywood was added between the bunks and in the cockpit area from the rear of the cabin to the front of the aft bench seat. Main propulsion was a rebuilt '72 Johnson 25hp outboard motor with manual start and tiller steering. A nearly new Evinrude 8hp outboard, which I still own, was carried for backup. It also had a Hummingbird depth recorder, spotlight, anchors, paddle, life jacket, and throwable seat cushion.

For this trip I loaded it up with five gallons of water, a Coleman camp stove and food for five days, three changes of clothes, rain gear, sleeping bag, a first aid box that included a snake bite kit, a portable potty, soaps, rag, towel, flashlight, and fishing rods. U.S. Army Engineer Nashville District supplied me with Cumberland River Navigation Charts. An alarm clock, portable AM-FM radio, pencil and paper were also taken along for companionship.

Old Hickory Lock's hours of operation were from 6am to 6pm. About 7 o'clock that morning I entered the lock chamber. The lock personnel commented that the tabletops were probably for pulling commercial fishing nets, and I let them think that. They were close to being correct. The boat was still registered as a commercial fishing craft. I had originally bought and used it for pulling mussel trails... another story. When the downstream lock doors opened to let me out, I got my first of many surprises that day.

The MonArk model 1860 has a 60" bottom and its 2' sides rise in about a 2:1 ratio, giving a 7' beam at the gunwales and making it a real safe big river boat. Below the dam, with all floodgates open, the wave action was tremendous and I had to gun it to ride with it and keep steerageway. I guess 3' would be a good estimate of the wave heights for about 200 yards below the dam. The rains had stopped about two days before and the weather was clear and beautiful. I had given little thought to the river level still being that high as the waters from upstream were just now adding to the flood crest.

Down the flooded Cumberland we commenced, and at a fairly good clip at that. The driftwood was everywhere and there was no chance of reaching a high enough speed to plane. I switched to the 8hp motor to save fuel. Somewhere between the mouth of the Stones River (CRM 205.8) and present day Opryland (CRM 197.3), on the right descending bank, a woman was out in her backyard clad only in pajamas picking up something. My "hey there" startled her as

Riding the Crest

By Dave Wilson

she certainly didn't expect anyone to be traveling the flooded river. After gathering her wits and pajamas about her, she waved back.

Dodging driftwood, safe top speed was about 4mph greater than the river current, which by my calculations was running over 8mph. There wasn't any river traffic at all in Nashville (CRM 191). The General Jackson Showboat hadn't been built, nor had the water taxis moved to Music City yet. Commuters were moving right along on the Cumberland River bridges as I passed beneath them.

Bridge piers are a real danger for small boats at river flood stages. The main L&N Railroad bridge pier (CRM 190.4) is centered in the river and built of massive blocks of rock in the old style. It is enormous because it must bear the weight of one-third of the bridge when the channel swing span is opened to allow passage of towboats, showboats, and tall cruisers, especially in times of flood. There wasn't a whole lot of clearance between the bridge and the water this day. Thinking the huge whirling eddy below the pier was "really cool," I steered in its direction until I began to feel it actually pulling the boat towards it. Hitting the throttle I quickly got away from its grasp and knew I had been lucky to learn that lesson the "easy way."

From Nashville to Rock Harbor Marina (CRM 175.4) I began to notice an increase in the quantity and variety of "tree trash;" i.e., driftwood, paper, Styrofoam, boards, etc., that were lodged in the top limbs of the normal bank line trees. With the river at flood stage it would be a good time to clean it up because a crane would be needed at normal pool stage. I began to design a super "litter-picker" boat in my mind.

At Rock Harbor I was in for another surprise. Refueling was the major reason for stopping there, but that was out of the question. The docks were in a real mess and boats in their slips were in danger of being sunk as docks changed position and dipped into the water with mooring lines that were too short or already broken. The only guy there said there would be no charge for transient dockage but they couldn't be responsible for whatever might happen. I slept with one eye open that night and listened closely to the banging and squeaking from the half-sunken docks.

At first light I left the carnage and went about a half mile downstream. I motored far enough into the tree line to avoid the main current before having oats and coffee for breakfast. It was a beautiful time of year, trees were budding and birds were heading North again on this crisp, clear morning. Hopefully I could top off my gas tanks at Ashland City, Tennessee.

Traveling along at just over idling speed, I was still making over 8mph with the current. The trash in the trees had still not diminished much. The Ashland City dock just above the State Hwy 49 bridge (CRM 158) looked deserted. I eased up to it and looked around for any signs of life, to no avail. When I pulled away from the dock the current pushed me into shallow water and the motor skeg raked a hard bottom for a few seconds. Returning to the middle of the river

I checked the aluminum prop for damage and it was fine, but some paint was chipped on the skeg. I really hated that it happened with the motor being so new.

The mouth of the Harpeth River (CRM 152.9) flew by and I began to look out for Cheatham Lock & Dam (CRM 148.7). As I saw it, I eased toward the lock on the right descending bank. The river width above and below Cheatham Dam is about the same so there was no diminishing of the current due to a wider pool above the dam. I could see that the river was flowing over the dam and stayed as far to starboard as possible, aiming for the ladder at the beginning of the lock wall. Behind the ladder was the cord to pull for requesting lockage. Having no marine radio, I knew I had to stop and pull the cord at the ladder. I was about to learn another lesson!

If I missed the ladder the chances of turning the boat around and coming back upstream were 50-50 using the 8hp motor, which I failed to realize at the time. Any miscalculation could bring a swift and sad end to both the MonArk and myself. Shifting the motor out of gear and drifting quickly towards the ladder, I had to get to the front of the boat, and fast. One chance to grab it was all I had! I could feel the strain on my ankles as they pulled the boat to a stop below the ladder. Using all my strength, I jockeyed the boat into a position to tie it off to the ladder and then pulled the lockage request cord. A very close call this time!!

Soon the massive doors opened and I idled into the lock chamber and tied off to one of the floating pylons. They are designed to rise and fall as the water level in the lock chamber changes. I didn't hear the "toot" they gave when the lower lock doors were opened. My mind was mulling over the close call at the ladder and I was ashamed of myself for letting it happen. The lock lady came over to my boat and said, "They're open," pointing at the lower doors.

I replied, "I'm sorry, but the water level hardly changed." I had been watching the pylons and waiting for them to go down. Of course, at flood conditions and with water going over the dam, they didn't descend far, maybe a foot at best!

Below Cheatham it was another bumpy ride with wild eddy currents sending the boat first one direction then another. I think I said, "Yahoo, ride 'em cowboy" as we bounced along. Enjoying the scenery, dodging driftwood, and the beginning of a real worry about finding fuel occupied me as we voyaged on towards Clarksville, Tennessee. If no gas could be found at Clarksville (CRM 126), could any be found anywhere?

As I pulled into an opening behind the private boat club dock (CRM 132.3) just above Clarksville, I thought I saw someone. He was amazed to see me traveling on the river, but they, too, couldn't refuel me. He said my best bet would be at the Cumberland City Ferry landing. I knew I could make it that far, so off I went again.

The river was getting wider now and the location of the true channel was getting harder to determine. At one point I thought I heard engines behind me, but it was a really large cabin cruiser that was beside me. It had slowed down to pass me, or to check me out, but was about a quarter mile from me on the other side of the river. As he resumed full throttle his wake looked to be 4' tall, even at this distance. I just shook my head, having

seen driftwood consisting of whole trees.

Upon reaching the Cumberland City ferry (CRM 104.2) it was fairly obvious why the ferry was out of service. Neither ramp was exposed and the water level on the city side of the river was not that far from the main highway through town. I saw a gasoline station sign and pulled the boat up on a gently sloping grassy bank. Taking two fuel cans, I walked across the highway to the store with the sign. The proprietor said, "I saw you pull in and was afraid you was gonna need some gas, but we don't sell it anymore. We should'a taken the sign down, but since we didn't, I'll drive you over to another station and we'll get some." With that said, he closed up his store and we went and purchased the gas. He told me this was the second highest level he had ever seen the river at. He also said that he doubted if anywhere downriver would have any gas and that it would be hard to find any boat ramps that weren't underwater to haul the boat out at. A really fine gentleman doing a favor for a stranger.

Nightfall was fast approaching and I needed a safe place to spend the second night. I found a reasonable place about a mile past the Cumberland City Steam Plant (CRM 103). Nosing through the treetops of the original left descending bank I saw the top of a fence line. Tying off to tree limbs I determined to use the fence as my water level gauge that night. If the river began dropping too fast, I would need to move quickly to avoid being grounded. I need not to have worried, it only dropped 6" that night. Shortly before bedding down I saw a snake swimming along looking for something to climb up on, so I raised the motor out of the water. I was really tired from the day's events and the lack of a sound sleep the first night. Many voyages later this axiom still seems to be true for me: The first night is not a good sleep.

About 1am I awoke to the rudest and most startling noise I've ever experienced. For about a full minute I couldn't determine the origin of the unusual, loud, and ominous sounds. As I was about to untie the boat and get the heck out of there, it finally struck me. The sounds must be coming from the Cumberland City steam plant... maybe they were letting off steam. Strange new sounds in strange new surroundings can really get your adrenalin pumping!

However a recent vacation shed some retrospective light on that steamy situation. If you've ever been to New Orleans and taken the dinner cruise on the true paddle-wheel steamboat *Natchez*, about 10 o'clock as the cruise is ending back at the dock, it lets off steam in a series of toots that are so loud they shake the whole boat, causing the water to vibrate. The echo of the sounds bouncing off the buildings of the city of New Orleans lasts four-and-a-half minutes! My son and I were staying at a motel seven miles from the boat and the next night I could easily hear it that far away. The Cumberland City steam plant was about one-third that loud, yet loud enough to scare the you know what out of most anybody the first time they hear it, but at the time of my 1983 trip I didn't realize the sound of "letting off steam" could be so daunting.

But I digress. Next morning, after a leisurely breakfast, I cleaned up the boat and myself, watched a commercial fisherman fighting the current working his way

upstream with a boatload of buffalo fish, and headed downstream. By now the realization that this trip would be cut short was taking root. I needed to find a usable boat ramp on the right descending bank, so off we charged. At Dover, Tennessee (CRM 89) I pulled the boat into the paved parking lot of a U.S. Corps of Engineers Base and talked to a guy there who agreed with the store owner. He mentioned Bumpus Mills as a possible take-out site. There certainly was no question about turning around and going back upriver. The driftwood and current killed this idea early on.

Pulling into Bumpus Mills Marina (CRM 77.3) that evening, I checked out the ramp and made the call to my sister, Shirley. She and her husband would come and retrieve the boat and me at noon the next day. The guys at the marina couldn't believe I had come all the way downriver from Old Hickory Lake. I left Bumpus Mills with some night crawlers, hoping to get in a little fishing. Upstream a short distance and across the river I found a good anchorage in a cove out of the current and below a high bluff. The fish were biting. They were only small catfish and yellow perch, but fun to catch. As the sun was setting and I settled into the sleeping bag for the last night, I could hear what sounded like firecrackers going off in the distance. Thinking about it, I couldn't figure out why. It sure wasn't a holiday. This trip's excitement was not over yet!

I don't know how long I had been asleep, but once again, new, strange, and very loud noises had me sitting bolt upright out of a deep sleep. This time I thought I knew what it was for sure. Firecrackers! Local teenagers must surely be throwing them at me from the top of that bluff! The racket was close and loud. There was only one thing to do to stop it, so naturally I did it, another lesson learned, this time the "hard way." After sliding back the cabin roof cover a ways, I fired a round straight up with my "snake gun." For a full five minutes I was stone deaf! Well, at least that was the last of the firecracker sounds. About a year later I may have learned the true source of the sounds. It had to be beavers, working their way upriver against the current and slapping

their tails to gain momentum.

Next day was a little fishing in the morning, loading up the boat and heading back to Hendersonville. On the way back we stopped at a nice restaurant and I realized this first voyage was just what it was meant to be, a learning trip cut short

**Postscript:* CRM is an abbreviation for "Cumberland River Mile." The mileages shown are distances from the mouth of the river, where the confluence with the Ohio river takes place. I bought and always use a marine radio for lockage now. Strange noises still get my attention, but I'm not as quick to panic. A few calls to the Corps of Engineers, TVA, or other river navigation authorities are always made prior to embarking. The camera is not forgotten. I named the MonArk Blue Heron and reconfigured it for cruising. Check the "Photos" section of this personal website: <http://home.bellsouth.net/personal-pages/PWP-davjun>

Happy Voyaging!!

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Well, it was a lot of trips but I'll just hit the high spots. The Gator Hole is actually a bunch of holes way back in the swampy part of Lake Miccosukee and they are very hard to get to but it sure is worth it. Lake Miccosukee was the ancestral home of the Miccosukee Indians of this region before Andrew Jackson and his ilk came along and cleaned the place up so it would be safe for white people. I better tell you what I mean.

Lake Miccosukee is in Jefferson County, Florida, and in the county seat there is a house in which the last white person to be killed by the Indians in that county died. She was a 16-year-old girl who was watching some little children in this house while the grown people were out trying to break a little ground in what was (and is) some of the richest farm land around here. The girl saw the Indians slipping up on the house and told the children to run out the other door and hide in the woods. The Indians killed her but the children got away. After that nobody wanted to live there anymore.

The house was well made out of old heart pine sawmill boards and stayed down in the woods in good shape for a long time. Jackson's successors made the woods safe and people moved back. Finally, not too long ago, somebody moved it to Monticello and they jacked it up and put it on top of another house (it was... is... a very small one-room house) and made it into a bedroom. The new owners decided to take up the linoleum that was on the floor and there on the pine boards of the floor was the blood stain of that young girl. It is right across the street from the Episcopal church in Monticello.

Lake Miccosukee is sort of peanut shaped and arranged with the long axis sort of north and south with the two big ends connected by a narrow (maybe a mile wide) part of water so shallow that it is completely covered by lily pads and grass. Most of the two big ends are covered by weeds, too, but there is a pretty good sized clear hole at the north end where the boat ramp is.

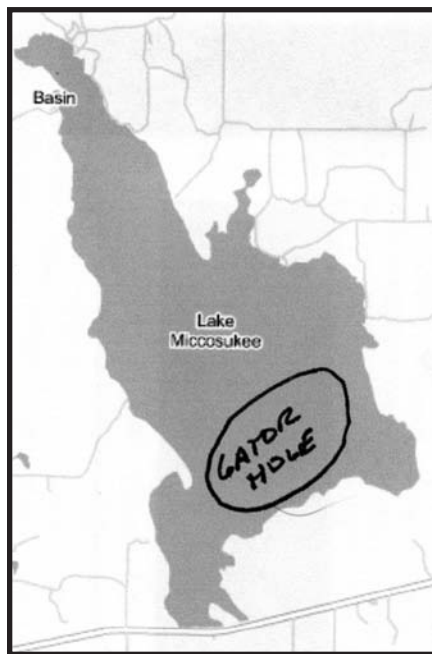
I don't know why but there is a tradition at boat ramps at lakes and rivers around here that a bunch of loud drunks, litterbugs, vandals, and thieves hang out there all the time and Miccosukee is no exception. Seems like there ought to be someone like Andrew Jackson come in to clean up a mess like that don't it? There are two classes of people there. One is those trashy yahoos at the bar and the other is folks who came to launch their boats and go fishing. The fishermen are just old standard issue various people... and everybody belonging to various ethnic groups. Most of them fish right near the ramp in the north hole which is very good fishing some of the time.

You can just paddle out a little way from the ramp and be on one of the best bream beds in Florida. Miccosukee bream (both bluegills and fliers) are legendary for large size and dark color. There are speckled perch there, too, and some days it is possible to "limit out" in less than an hour with 25 big perch (the law says they have to be 9" or better). People catch largemouth bass, catfish, pickerel (called "jacks" here), and war-mouths there all the time. A lot of the people are specialists.

One of the best bream fishermen is an enormously fat white woman so big that she has a disabled sticker on her car and always gets the best parking place in the state lot at the boat ramp. She is always accompanied by

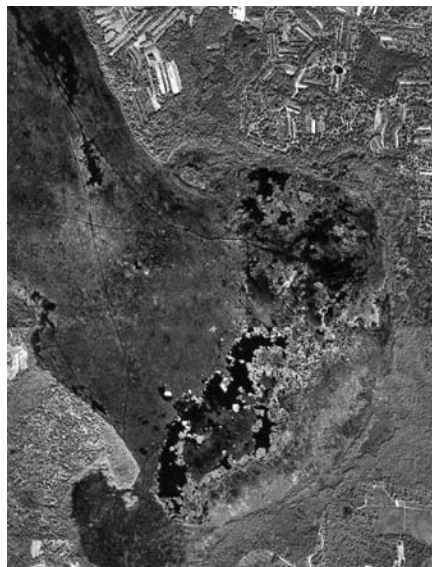
Hot Rod Trip To The Gator Hole

By Robb White



a half-witted looking boy about 17 or 18 years old who does all the work. She backs down (very skillfully using the mirrors like a truck driver) and he launches the boat and then helps her heave her vast bulk out of the car and onto a pedestal seat in the bow of the boat. Once she is situated and has her Winston lit and sucking good, he parks the car. While he is doing that he wears a diabolically devilish look like he might floorboard the old Oldsmobile 98 and burn rubber and haul ass out of the parking lot with the boat trailer bouncing along behind, but he doesn't. He doesn't park straight worth a flip, either.

So this old gal fishes over the bow and the kid runs the trolling motor in the stern. Trolling motors are all very long shaft style and it is a good thing in this case because if it was normal length the propeller would be about a foot from the water. They ease around out there in the bonnets very slowly



and the woman catches one big bream after another with a cane pole by dipping a cricket on a short line in carefully selected holes between the lily pads. She is expert. When she catches one (2lb Miccosukee bluegills are not uncommon) she pulls him around as she slowly swivels in her seat and presents the boy with the catch alongside the boat. He carefully nets the fish and takes him off the hook and catches another cricket out of the cage, hooks him on the hook and the cycle repeats itself. I have never heard a mumbling word out of either one of them. After they have their 25 they go home and, I imagine, fry all those bream and she eats them... 25 2lb bream... fried in hog lard. Jesus.

Anyway, most people don't even know what's at the other end of that old weedy lake many miles away. Only a few very knowledgeable people go there. Not only do they have to know how to do it, they have to be ready to deal with the consequences of failure to come back. I bet Andrew Jackson never made it all the way back in there. The best way to get there is in an airplane boat ("airboat") and those have been a tradition on these weedy lakes around here since the '30s. The original ones ran real airplane engines but lately these yahoos have convinced themselves that a big, heavy, ill suited V8 automobile engine is more macho (and cheaper) even though more than one group of yahoos has spent more time than they intended back in the wilderness because of broken crankshafts and such.

Don't you think this would be a good time to digress and explain all about the history and peculiarities of airplane boats? Me, too. The first ones were just something jacked together by somebody just so they could go back in places completely inaccessible by anything else. They built a wide, buttheaded plywood skiff and welded up something to hold a regular airplane engine turned around backwards to blow out the stern. They were steered by an air rudder and one of the first things these experimenters discovered was that these contraptions steered differently from a regular boat.

What they do is skitter along sideways when you try to turn them and the only way to control them is to point them so the propeller blows in the opposite way from the direction you want the boat to go. In a correctly executed sharp turn they'll gradually stop sliding sideways and start going forward again... unless they trip over the chine and turn their top-heavy selves over and kill one or more people with the propeller (the propeller cage is a late model invention)... so strongly beveled chines and great width of hull became hallmarks of airboats.

Another airboat hazard was stumps. Airplane boats are not efficient except at high speed, and by that I mean absolutely flat wake speed. They hang up in the grass and lily pads just like any other boat unless they are all the way up on top of the water with the bottom lubricated by air. They just about have to be flying. Because of that, light weight was important and most early airplane boats were made out of 1/4" plywood. Even with the little A65 Continental engine like in Piper Cubs and such, an old style airplane boat would run 70mph, and it didn't take but just a few stumps to booger up a 1/4" plywood bottom at that speed.

So a brilliant genius (a market duck hunter named Scotey Beverly... good friend of my momma) riveted galvanized tin on the

bottom of his boat. Not only did the zinc lubricate the bottom in its peculiar way, when he hit a stump and busted the plywood all to punk, the boat would be able to limp on back from out in never-never land and he wouldn't have to sit out there for three days whining about how he was out of cell phone range and drinking lake water and wishing for some more Cheetos, like some yahoo with a broken crankshaft on the big block Chevy.

Which, you know an airplane engine is a special thing... made for the duty. A lot of airplanes are still flying with engines built before WWII. Of course, the government has all these mandatory maintenance and inspection rituals so airplanes won't fall out of the sky onto people's houses all the time, but still, that's a good engine. I bet there ain't no 1947 454 Oldsmobile engines like that fat bearm fisherman has in her old 98 with anywhere near the hours as some of these old J3 Cubs. Not only do airplane engines have two complete magneto operated ignition systems, they have about a foolproof carburetor and all the parts are replaceable, including the complete cylinders.

But the proof of the pudding of an airplane engine is the crankshaft. It is forged out of very good steel and so are the connecting rods. It ain't good to break a crankshaft in an airplane even if you are in cell phone range so they are made to handle the peculiar stress imposed by turning a 6' propeller bolted rigidly to the flange. Not only do the pistons exert a cyclic torque to the crankshaft, the inertia of the propeller responds in kind and the whole business has to flex with the firing of each cylinder. There is no dampening effect at all. Ain't no torque converter on an airplane.

Not only are there the impulses of the firing of the cylinders and the resulting feedback from the inertia of the propeller, but the gyroscopic phenomenon is mighty strong. Because natural gyroscopic precession is gripped by the fact that the operator is trying to make the boat go where he wants it to go, there is a hell of a strain on the crankshaft when the boat is turned. You can actually see the tips of the prop blades change relationship to the cage as an airboat turns. It takes an airplane engine to do right under those circumstances and these heavy automotive monsters that are becoming so popular around here are, like so many popular things, no match for the lightweight old style boats.

Does that mean that I yearn for me a little skitterbug with a lovely little A65 engine on a genuine aircraft tubing frame that I welded myself and no cage and no electric starter? Hell no. I wouldn't have one of the loud sons of bitches... but there was a time when I would have.

I have heard about the Gator Hole all my life and always wanted to try to shove a canoe back in there just to see what Primordea looked like to the terrible Miccosukees (who, they say, were very peaceable people unless somebody tried to crowd them and then they called up their homeland security).

I was gossiping around the bait store one day when a man came in with a box full of very big speckled perch. I thought they must be from Lake Talquin (which might have the biggest black crappie in the world, some say) but they were very dark. I finally wheedled around and got the man to admit that they had come from the Gator Hole. I had to threaten and abuse the man several

different ways before he admitted that it was possible to take a small, narrow boat back in there if one knew what he was doing.

I carefully examined his rig. It was one of those fiberglass boats built by various manufacturers trying to copy the original Gheenoe invented by Harley W. Gheen, who was a rocket scientist over on the Cape. I couldn't tell if this man's boat was the real thing or not because it was so beat up and raggedy, but I am here to tell you a Gheenoe is a good durn boat. One of those and a beat up 9.9 just like that man had is just the ticket for around here. If I didn't have the capability to build something at least as good, I would have one myself. Google it up sometime. That's Gheenoe. If you misspell it you will come up with one of the copies... if you are lucky... might come up with a porno site.

I didn't tell the man but not only do I have just exactly the boat for the duty but I know a thing or two about a thing or two, too (whew... don't try to say that around a mouthful of Froot Loops). I trotted straight to the library and before I got settled in the swivel chair (trying not to act fat) I had typed www.terra-server.com in the window and, before the woman at the computer next to me had finished her cell phone conversation I had an aerial photograph of the south end of Lake Miccosukee working its way out of the ink jet printer. Old Gheen ain't the only rocket scientist in the skiffboat business. My son taught me how to do that.

If you zoom in on the terra-server map you can see little trails all out through the weeds of Lake Miccosukee. There are holes of clear water all over the place that (except for rocket scientists) nobody but an expert at local knowledge would know about. The first clear day (it has been a wet, stormy spring, thank goodness) I took off down there. Sam was working on the spring boat in the shop and Jane was playing with the baby so I had to go by myself. It took me all day to get back to the Gator Hole but I did it. Then it took until way after dark to find my way back out of there.

No, dammit, I did not use any GPS or cell phone. I have had a lot of experience in navigating swamps and marshes and I knew what I was doing, but Lake Miccosukee has a very unique characteristic which needs further investigation. I have never seen any place that has identical willow bushes and perfectly matching runt cypress trees before. It must be an inbreeding thing. I am going to check their DNA and calculate their coefficient of consanguinity. I'll let you know.

It was a good thing there was a full moon or I would have been drinking lake water and licking Vienna sausage cans. When I finally got back to the boat ramp one of the drunks over at the bar hollered loudly, "Did you catch anything?"

"No", I replied politely.

"Didn't catch nothing?"

"No."

"You ain't caught no fish at all?"

"No."

"Well, what the hell did you go for then?"

"I went to see yo momma," said I, feeling my pistol in my pocket to make sure which end was up.

I had my bearings though and the next lull in the weather I went back prepared to bring home the bacon. It wasn't much of a lull and I got rained on a lot but I caught four nice specks and one big bluegill. When I got

back to the ramp the half-witted boy was trying to back the trailer sort of in the direction of the water to load out. I knew that woman had her 50 and hadn't gone a hundred yards from the car. You know there is one kind of rocket science and then there is some more rocket science. I got it figured out next time.

The lull came in the afternoon and I didn't have but just a little while before dark and the full moon was past so it would be rising a little late. I hurried right along... might have pushed Jane's little Kia a little beyond what it is used to on the 18 miles to the boat ramp because it smelled a little like a hard ridden Ford when I got out to slide the little Gray Boat off the trailer. I have been running the boat enough to gain a little more confidence than I had when that picture taken of me was on the cover of this magazine a while back when I was scared to take my hand off the throttle.

Though the little boat feels a little squirrely, it is actually pretty predictable running wide open with only one person in there. I had my trolling motor and a good sized battery up in the bow and that helped a good little bit, but I am here to tell you, that's a fast dadblamed boat. I ain't put the GPS to it but it runs right along. The little gator trails (I have not managed to go the same way twice in five trips and still don't know where I am half the time) are crooked and very narrow, and it took quite a few miles for me to get up my attamation.

Which, that's a family word my little sister made up a long time ago. I had built a tree house way up in a big hickory tree in the back yard. I nailed about a hundred short one by fours to the trunk of the tree for steps with only two small nails barely holding on about halfway through the bark. I had a telescope up there and all sorts of interesting things and I told them all about how wonderful it was up there with the birds sitting on my finger and all. Although she was only about four years old, she wanted to go up there mighty bad but about halfway up those wigglesome steps she stopped and just hung on and looked down for about three minutes.

"You scared?" I needed to know.

"No," she replied.

"Well, what did you stop for then?"

"I am just getting up my attamation."

And she did and came on up there, too.

I got up my attamation and poured the coal to the little Martin and we went through the little trails like a hot rod. Bob Hicks would have at that ride up, I believe.

You know old George Martin who designed the motor was a... well, they hadn't invented rocket science back then but that's a bad little motor. When it gets on the cam (yes, Virginia, it has valves) just right it sounds about like a bat out of hell. I think old man Martin must have delegated some of the design parts of the accessories after he finished the motor part because that thing has the stupidest damned gas hole I ever saw in my life. I'll get back to that and conclude this adventure in a minute but first I must digress once again.

It has been brought to my attention that my interactions with certain living species might not only be ill advised but even illegal. I can summarize my thinking on that real succinctly but it might remind me of some other things since the doings of animals have always fascinated me. I normally don't bother animals unless I intend to eat them or they are trying to eat me or damage my goods. I'll

slap the pure guts out of a greenhead horsefly and am absolute hell on these carpenter bees and I think I am the second best packrat trapper in the world. My little sister (of the attamation) is the undisputed best. She catches them in live traps and with great respect releases them in affluent subdivisions where they are perfectly free to gnaw the wiring out of BMWs and Hummers.

I have trapped and transported quite a few animals myself. I hope nobody in authority is reading this but I have, personally, removed about half of Dog Island's population of coons to a more affluent situation on the mainland. What happens is that some damned fools let them eat dog food all summer long because they look so cute. They eat a lot of garbage (love to lick a Vienna sausage can) and get fat and raise herds of baby coons. Then when the winter comes all the people go home and do not generate garbage or leave dog food out for the coons and the population is too big for what comes naturally and all the coons get to starving most pitifully.

It is better to leave the state of nature alone for sure but this is not a natural situation. I bait them up a little bit and then catch about five at a time in a big homemade wire trap and haul them to a much better place. It is called "catch and release" and that and pack rats is about the only thing I do that with. I do not catch fish that I don't need just for sport. That's a piss poor way to act to my notion. That fish doesn't enjoy participating in your sport worth a darn. If you needed to eat him, there would be a point to it. I hunt and fish for something to eat and I try to think about what I am doing so I believe that's natural. I don't do any "varmint hunting" either. As for all interactions with wild animals, I try to pay attention to what I am doing. I don't bother things that don't need my attentions.

One of the things I don't bother with when I can is interaction with officials of the government and officious civilians. I don't know if you know this or not but it is mighty hard for an uncertified boat designer or builder to get a legal durn serial number for a boat. To get certified as a legitimate "manufacturer" requires jumping through many dangerous hoops, one of which goes by the acronym OSHA. I like the way I do things and am too old to be open to suggestions from people with less experience in my specialty than I have.

If I wanted to comply with all that crap, I would hire a bunch of hard working Hispanic people and ex-special ed Amurricans and show Bayliner a thing or two about a thing or two. Which, that's how I get around the serial number conundrum. I use an ersatz Bayliner serial number... It is a hell of a lot better than fooling with officialdom and the fool government computers ain't got sense enough to figure it out. I think all the rocket scientists in the government work for NASA.

I have to tell you about another interaction with a federally protected species and then I'll get back to the hot rod segment before Bob Hicks falls to sleep in his easy chair. When I was a boy I was fascinated with the woods and water and wanted to learn everything I could. I was very fortunate because right down the road from us lived one of the most wonderful field ornithologists who ever lived. Not only did he know birds but every other natural thing, too. I fol-

lowed him around like a little dog.

One time we were picking up tower birds down by Lake Iamonia. What the deal with that was that the first TV tower around here was built about 1953 by John H. Phipps. To get coverage as far as they could they built a 1000' tower on top of a high hill just over the Florida line from me and Mr. Stoddard (Herbert L. Stoddard...*The Bob White Quail and Memoirs of a Naturalist*, read those collectors items if you can find them). Migrating birds of all sorts hit the guy wires of the tower at night and in the morning there would sometimes be hundreds of dead and crippled birds on the ground beneath the tower.

Mr. Stoddard kept the grass cut real low so he could find them quickly because, as soon as it got to be daylight other animals would come get them. We always got there before daylight and hurried around with our flashlights picking up birds and killing the ones who weren't dead yet and Mr. Stoddard would spend the rest of the day preparing "skins" (which wind up as stuffed birds lying in cotton in a drawer in a steel filing cabinet) to be sent off to museums and such. He ate the carcasses. I ate a good many, too. One night we had such a kill of white eyed vireos that we had to eat them for about a week and a vireo is a real little bird... extremely little after they are skint. Four and twenty of them sure won't make much of a pie. It was a pitiful business.

Though Mr. Stoddard was a most wonderful man, he had a peculiar personality. For one thing, he didn't have any sense of humor except for the most basic level pun... he just loved those. He was also a pedant of the first order. If it was possible to use some special word, he would do it. He eschewed the use of common language all he could.

"We need to refrigerate these carcasses as quick as we can to avoid post mortem penetration of the flesh," he explained once while we were skinning a batch of little warblers. We were scurrying around catching crippled birds one dark, foggy morning when something big hissed and lunged at Mr. Stoddard. As fearless as he was... Oh no... not again.

One time he was on the river bank looking for bird nests when he came across a big rattlesnake in his way. He just calmly punted the coiled snake out into the river where my father was trying to play like he was fishing with a fly rod. No matter which way my father scrambled, the high floating, furious, coiled snake changed his drift to come right to him.

"Don't worry, Robb," yelled Mr. Stoddard, "He's fully into pre-molt. His sensory pits are disabled and the integument over his eyes has become opaque and he can't see a thing. Just stand still."

Yeah, right. My father gave himself a hernia trying to get away from that snake and never did find his fly rod.

At that, I believe, before I get back to any one of these subjects I have abandoned so far, I better explain a little about all these asides in this and other stories. I do that because, due to the magnificent tolerance of our clever editor, I can get away with it. I know a lot of things that are only worth a paragraph or two. I could do like a lot of legitimate writers and pad such a thing into about a damned tome but I wouldn't do that to you, so I just insert such a tidbit in the middle of the story like a commercial on the

TV. I can write straight literature. I'll prove it to you if you want me to. Just send me a big check. Send it to my agent... he keeps up with the official part.

So, despite nerves of steel, when that big thing hissed like a dragon in the foggy darkness right at Mr. Stoddard's heels, he levitated at least 40" straight up and moved sideways about 5' before he came back down. It was a golden eagle which had hit a guy wire and broken its wing at the elbow. Golden eagles are very scarce down here and they are big, too. They average out a good bit bigger than bald eagles and in the dark at close range one seems like a really large bird.

He wasn't scared of us either. He looked and acted like he could eat us both alive and was looking forward to it eagerly... with them eyes. I wish I could remember the pedantic word for it but the way ornithologists kill birds is to carefully work a finger or thumb up under the breast bone and compress their heart against their backbone. The poor little bird just seems to go to sleep in your hand and there is no damage to the "pelage" at all so the skin turns out perfect. Even though I was very young, my sense of humor was pretty well developed. "Are you going to mash his heart, Mr. Stoddard?" I asked.

"Well, we must preserve the pelage."

"Do you want me to go around the other side and distract him while you grab him?"

"No, we'll have to formulate another plan of action."

I wound up walking back to the car to get the 22. To this day there is a golden eagle skin (the only record in south Georgia) in a filing cabinet down at Tall Timbers Research Station with a damned tag on it saying, "Shot by Robb White" and y'all thought it was bad for me to catch that loon to see if she (or he) had a hook in his elbow.

That's just a drop in the bucket. In case any of you are reaching for the phone to call the federal government about that 55-year-old incident with the golden eagle, Mr. Stoddard had both federal and state licenses to "collect" anything he wanted to and delegate the killing to anybody he chose. He, I believe, made skins of the last two ivory billed woodpeckers collected in this country. He didn't shoot the birds. This is another short story which, since I have abandoned any pretense at linear literature, I might as well get done with.

When Mr. Stoddard (he was self-educated and had no degree) was in the middle of his longleaf forest ecosystem studies in the early '20s, he met an old cracker turpentine hand who said that he had seen a pair of ivory billed woodpeckers.

"You are mistaken, sir," stated Mr. Stoddard unequivocally. "What you saw was undoubtedly the common pileated woodpecker which superficially resembles the extinct ivory bill. There are no ivory billed woodpeckers left in existence. The last one died on December 23, 1918 at 13:00 hours Eastern Standard time." (I made that last sentence up, RW). The next day when Mr. Stoddard got home from his field work there on his doorstep was a pair of ivory billed woodpeckers. The skins are in the Field Museum in Chicago.

When we were building our house on Dog Island we rented an apartment in Lanark Village (a friendly little colony of retired Yankee blue collar machinists and such) and hauled all the materials over in that Bobby

Shiver crab boat. There was an old pelican with a broken wing that hung around the pass between two little marshy islands that shelter the shore along there. At first his wing was dragging alongside as he swam and we could see that it was broken at the elbow (only too common) and figured he had hit a power line or utility pole guy wire (only too common) and hoped it would get well but it didn't. We fed him some little fish we caught and so did some of the other people and he got real tame and would swim right up alongside the boat when we stopped. He could swallow a hand sized pinfish.

After a while I noticed that the outer part of his broken wing had become detached from the humerus and was just hanging by a twisted strip of skin. I also noticed that maggots had infested the hanging part so I slipped over the side of the boat opposite him and swam under the boat and caught him by both legs and cut off the dead part and turned him loose. He swam off most indignantly, wiggling his tail like a duck.

He soon got over the insult and became tame again and lived for two more years. Gradually the stump of his wing atrophied until the naked humerus was sticking out where the skin had receded. I went to see a veterinarian to ask him about maybe clipping the bone and sewing the skin back over the end so it would heal back infection tight but he said if the bird hadn't become infected in all that time he was probably doing about the best he could.

The old pelican had a band on his leg. When he died, I sent it in to Washington and they wrote me that he had been banded 11 years before that. The thick aluminum of the band was worn very thin in places where he had been swimming with it on his leg for so long but his shank looked fine. I think he died of old age. My shanks look just fine, too, and I am waiting.

I have caught pelicans before. A lot of them get into fishing line or pick up treble hook plugs and get hung up so they can't open their beaks. I could go the official route but I take it upon myself to just get the job done. A pelican ain't all that bad to handle. They threaten you with their beak but the bone of it is very thin and limber and they can't bite hard at all and that little hook on their nose makes it so they can't spear you. They are strong, though, and it is best to clamp those wings first thing.

I'll tell you one you don't want to mess with besides a loon and that's a frigate bird. I unhooked one in Puerto Rico. They'll eat you up. You have to be careful of any good sized bird. I am going to spare you the worst encounter I ever had with a bird. That was a mute swan. I had to go to the emergency room to get my nose sewed back on. The moral of this story is that if you hang around the water much you are going to see pitiful things due to the carelessness of people. If you dial 911 and tell the operator you know where a pelican with a plug in his pouch is, don't hold your breath until the officials arrive. Me, I'll do what I can all by myself.

I got so regular with my trips to the Gator Hole that I felt like a race driver running the same course. I tuned the cursed Tillotson carburetor and the little thing on the magneto plate that works the throttle and the trim of the tilt (adjustable underway on a Martin) until I got all I could get out of the little rig. The little boat handles so sweetly and banks in the turns so adroitly that I had

all the confidence in the world with my wild rides during the brief lulls in the weather. I got to where I could get back there in less than an hour if I only got lost two or three times. Hotshot that I was, I was nowhere in the league with the 450lb woman and her potential presidential candidate partner. Oh, I caught a few fish and learned a little lore.

One man told me something interesting. He said that fish don't bite on Lake Miccosukee when the sun is shining bright. He said that the best time was just before it starts to rain. He figured that while it is bright they fast and get hungry and then start looking for supper when the clouds of the front come. Luckily that situation is what has prevailed most of this spring. I watched the local weather (www.underground.com) radar to look for lulls and one day I hit the jackpot. It was a bright, clear day but here came a strong, fast moving front sweeping in from the west like a train. I dropped everything and hooked up the already loaded boat to Jane's Kia and boogied out of here.

It was looking like some weather at the ramp and everybody else was pulling out. It was Friday afternoon and the drunks were in full cry over at the bar when I launched.

"Where the hell you think you going?" one needed to know.

"Going to see yo momma," I replied as soon as the damned Tillotson dribbled the dollop of gas that signified that it had finished priming. I couldn't hear what he said over the acceleration of the little engine as it climbed up on the cam. I was gone like a Bob Hicks on a Spanish motorcycle down the little trails to the Gator Hole with my fishing pole and my minnows. It was the quickest trip yet. I didn't miss but one turn the whole way and, just as I eased into the first clearing (there are a bunch of them), it began to cloud up, the wind stopped entirely and the air got that funny feeling.

I started trolling slowly with the electric motor with a minnow on one of those curly tailed jigs that acts like he is swimming with his sparkly, chartreuse tail (the current trick at the bait store). I trolled about two miles and caught three little barely legal speckled perch. "Durn," I said, "It is fixing to get dark before I can vindicate myself for all this carrying on."

Just about that time it began to rain and blow the speckled perch started biting. I mean I hooked one on every cast. They were slapping the aluminum lid off the live box under my seat and wetting my ass even more than what the rain was doing. Some of them were big, too. It got dark before I felt like I had enough to feed all these grandchildren (you ought to see a four-year-old Chinese girl eat a 1lb fried speckled perch).

When I finally stopped fishing and started thinking, I realized that I might be in a fix. It was not just plain pitch dark and raining like hell, I had to pour six miles worth of gas into the damned, stupid, recessed gas hole of the Martin. I had to do it by feel and, due to the good fortune of the wind having died completely off again, I didn't get any on anything but my finger and one paper towel. I crunk up and started easing slowly in what I thought might be the right direction to the hole that led to the trail I had come in on. I ran into the weeds five or six times and, since I had my beautiful little bronze hotrod wheel on there instead of the weedless prop that came standard with the engine, I had to shut down and tilt the engine and unwrap the

grass and bonnet stems. I was looking at a real ordeal... maybe an all nighter.

Luckily Jane does not go to wringing her hands and dialing 911 in situations like that and I did have my water jug and a can of Vienna sausages so I figured it wouldn't be nothing but a thing as long as it didn't start hailing golf balls. As I was easing across the pitch dark Gator Hole the rain stopped. Then I noticed that I could see a little bit. Then the bright almost full moon rose over the trees shining through the clouds like it was looking down at Marie Lebeaux and, "Yowl!" said the little Martin and I was another man done gone.

We went back to the boat ramp in fine style. The drunks were tuned up, too, but the lights were so bright and the juke box was so loud they never noticed me loading up to go. Which is a good thing. I would have hated to have to take my 6' long solid ash paddle over there and interact.

Gator Holes

Alligators make clearings in the weeds of shallow lakes. I have talked to certified expert herpetologists about it and they say they don't think the gators do it for the hole's sake but for the mud and weeds they dig up to enhance the place. They pile the weeds and mud in the shallows to make a good place to pull out and take it easy in the sun and bellow and breed in season (the last of March, early April... pollen time). Sometimes their new ground breaks loose and floats off because of the buoyancy of all the dead vegetation. That suits the alligators fine and they continue to add material to their floating island until it gets pretty big and all sorts of vegetation grows there.

Some floating islands have good sized willow trees (all genetically identical in Miccosukee) on them. Because the water in most of the shallow lakes around here is pretty murky, the plants in the hole can't grow back anymore. Even lily pads can't store enough nutrition in their big rhizomes to force a pad all the way to the surface before it gives out so the holes stay pretty clear of weeds. When the water level falls, as it inevitably does regularly in these natural lakes, some of the floating islands ground out and the roots of the plants growing on them anchor them to the bottom and, when the water comes up, they become saturated and won't float back up. That makes a shallow place in the gator hole with weeds and grass (and big, ignorant bream and bass).

The whole situation is in a continual state of change because of the whims of the gators and other vagaries of nature. Just because you think you know the geography of such a place is no reason to become confident. It all looks the same but none of it is. Those alligators and speckled perch and all don't need to know their exact longitude and latitude. They have everything they need no matter where they are. So do I... well almost.

You know there is a rumor that Martin made something called a "Martin 60 Hi Speed" with a forged steel crankshaft and connecting rods. Supposed to run like blue bloody blazes on alcohol. Dang, these Republicans are fixing to push this gas up to \$3.00 a gallon pretty quick. Racing fuel ain't all that much by the drum around here Methanol (wood alcohol) is a byproduct of the paper mill industry and this is pulpwood city. I wonder what kind of crankshaft a Kia has?

International Scene

Australia will make no effort to stop Japan from increasing its kill of whales in the Antarctic because it could be accused of piracy if Japanese whaling ships were boarded.

The Canadian government survived a vote of no-confidence and that meant criminal charges might be imposed on mariners for accidental spills.

Indonesia will dredge the 167km long shallow Palk Straits, a key shipping route between the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean, so ships need not go around Sri Lanka. That upset Sri Lanka because it has proposed an 18km road bridge spanning the two nations at their closest point. The Sethusamudram Ship Canal would cost about \$565 million.

Taiwan was unhappy about the lurking presence of the Chinese surveillance ship *Fendou No. 4* and sent four frigates to keep an eye on it.

Hard Knocks and Thin Places

The usual sampling: The coal-carrying bulkier *Chinese Eagle* had an engine room fire about 1,000 miles east of Durban and was towed in.

The log carrier *Kiperousa* was also headed for Durban but went aground southwest of Port London, South Africa, after its engine failed and before a tug could arrive. Days later, salvors were still trying to save the vessel.

An explosion in the engine room of the Indian tanker *Basaveshwara* killed an engineer and badly burned two others.

An engine room fire on the German-flagged *Libra Rio Grande* injured two crewmen when a fuel filter malfunctioned during refueling operations and diesel oil sprayed onto a source of combustion.

The destroyer *USS Mustin* rescued 27 Indians and others from a life raft after they were driven off the burning Panamanian-flagged *Olympias*.

A midnight engine room fire on the pulses carrying *Faiz* killed the master as he tried to save three members of his family. "As soon as he opened the door, a huge ball of fire engulfed him," explained a survivor. The chief mate jumped into the sea in panic without a life jacket and was not found, but ten other crewmen were saved.

In the English Channel, the Russian *Yamal* and the Antiguan *Jessica B.* collided 20 miles south of Anvil Point, Dorset. Both ships and crews survived.

At Antwerp, the tanker *Phoenix Beta* collided with the small LPG carrier *Isargas*. Both had pilots on board.

The large Greek tanker *Astro Lupus* and the cargo ship *Safari* collided off the coast of Iran. Some oil leaked out.

The Liberian tanker *Chrisopigi Lady* and the Panamanian bulkier *Yue Shan* collided in the Singapore Strait. Both became somewhat dented. Also the bulkier *Everise Glory* sank after colliding with the container ship *Uni Concord* off Singapore.

A security officer on the Philippine ferry *SuperFerry 16* was shot and killed while arguing with a sea marshal at Davao (SuperFerry has stopped using sea marshals).

An engineer was fatally injured when a mooring line on the *MOL America* broke at Santos, Brazil.

Fifteen of 18 crew members survived the capsizing of the fishing vessel *Safina-I-Adil* off Gwadar, Omani.

Beyond the Horizon

By Hugh Ware

Efforts continued to find four Chinese sailors who went missing after their fishing boat was hit by a foreign ship in the East China Sea.

And the Chinese foreign minister swore that Chinese naval vessels had not fired on and sank the freighter *Sea Bee* during naval exercises.

The Grey Fleets

The U.S. Navy wants to change how it acquires Flight O versions of the new Littoral Combat Ship. Two consortia were to build two apiece to their designs but the LCS have such potential that the Navy wants more Flight Os before shifting to the improved Flight I designs.

It is no surprise that France may end up building part of the two aircraft carriers Britain is procuring since Thales, a French firm, is heavily involved in their design. Now France may add a third carrier to the order, one for itself. And BAE Systems submitted an unsolicited bid to build five more Type 45 destroyers. The MoD has already contracted for two batches of three but BAE argues that a batch of five is more cost effective.

Ten French jets landed in New Jersey after weather prevented them from landing on the French carrier *Charles de Gaulle* off the coast.

Britain cut its naval forces in 2004 for budgetary reasons and three countries are vying to buy three surplus Type 23 frigates. Chile seems to be in the lead but Belgium and Pakistani are gaining fast.

Four Spanish workers on the Norwegian frigate *Roadl Amundsen* under construction were killed cleaning a tank.

A Chinese submarine broke down while submerged in the South China Sea and was taken in tow. The Ming-class diesel electric sub may have had a fire.

India opened a huge new naval base on the Arabian Gulf at Karwar. It is the first Indian naval base that doesn't share space with commercial vessels.

A stash of amphetamine worth more than \$10,000 on the street was found in a compartment on the destroyer *RMS Edinburgh* during refit. The compartment was accessible by almost anybody. Sniffer dogs found no other stashes.

Multiple problems have plagued the former Royal Navy attack submarine now known as *HMCS Victoria* so it was taken out of service for repairs. Troubles included an exhaust system malfunction that chased personnel from the engine room, a complete loss of ability to store fresh or frozen food, and the inability to safely run the port main engine for extended periods. The four submarines the Canadians had chartered have presented severe challenges, including a bad electrical fire on the *HMCS Chicoutimi* that killed one officer.

The Royal Navy has another four attack submarines of the same class that it wants to get rid of but they are in no condition to dive and will probably be sold for scrap. Each should bring \$40,000-\$50,000. Consideration was given to artificial reefing them but that idea was (sorry!) scuttled.

Four South Korean Coast Guard vessels confronted three Japanese maritime police boats off Ulsan after Japanese police claimed

that the South Korean fishing boat *Shinpong-ho* had intruded into Japanese waters. Two Japanese policemen fell into the water during a scuffle and a South Korean fisherman suffered a head wound that required hospitalization. The "hostilities" ended with official protests and all ships went their ways.

The White Fleets

Cunard said that the *QE2*, contrary to previous reports, will not be taken out of service in 2010 when new SOLAS (Safety of Life at Sea) provisions come into effect. The announcement means the *QE2* is in for an expensive refurbishment and updating.

Star Cruises thinks that the Himalayan nation of Nepal has many potential cruise passengers and has positioned the SuperStar Gemini at Singapore for a four-month trial.

The *Enchantment of the Seas* was lengthened by 22m, the new section arriving on a barge looking much like a narrow slice of wedding cake on edge.

The comforts of home are so important to cruisers. The newly refitted 1,378-passenger *Thomson Celebration* cut short a Mediterranean cruise when plumbing in 250 cabins failed. The problem was fixed but occurred again so, go home everybody.

And the *Oceana* was hit by a norovirus that disabled about 10% of the passengers.

The *Norwegian Majesty* hit three yachts after coming through the very narrow St. George's Town Cut in Bermuda into the Powder Hill anchorage in high wind conditions. The liner fouled the anchor chain of one yacht, breaking it and badly scaring the yacht's crew, then hit two other yachts moored nearby.

The *Aurora* started to the aid of a yacht that had lost a man overboard during a race but he was retrieved by his own people within ten minutes.

And it was concluded that an American couple that disappeared from the *Carnival Destiny* probably fell overboard.

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that foreign cruise lines sailing in U.S. waters must provide those in wheelchairs with better access to emergency equipment and the full range of public facilities.

Vessels That Go Back and Forth

Bangladesh had a bad month. The four-deck ferry *Raipura*, licensed to carry 135, went down on the Jamuna River in Bangladesh and 150 went missing while 50 lived. A few days earlier, the *Prince of Pafuakhali* went down in a storm on the Tuntuilla River, killing at least 60 and leaving 30 missing. And a wooden fishing boat being used as a ferry sank in the Megha River estuary in bad weather and about 40 are missing.

Kashmir now has its first motorized ferry.

An Australian Ferry ran into the Circular Quay at Sydney and did severe damage.

Nature

The fund that ultimately insures payments for oil spill cleanups will be bankrupt by 2009 unless Congress reinstates a tax on oil produced in or brought into the U.S.

Continued drought in the Missouri River basin may mean no barge traffic next year and a curtailed season this year.

Evidence has turned up that shows France failed to evacuate the Gambier

Islands when radioactive fallout from nuclear bomb tests on Mururoa exceeded predetermined levels. Weather forecasters used to predicting Saharan winds for French tests there failed to calculate the paths of fallout, and shifting winds from the northwest brought a radioactive rain onto the Gambier Islands. The minister for overseas departments was there, was quietly notified by an officer, and the minister and his aides then flew off in a Catalina seaplane. Nobody else was evacuated, no bans were imposed on consumption of food and water, but a technical ship did arrive to measure levels. According to one source, on July 2, 1966, the soil contamination on Mangareva was 142 times higher than in the forbidden zone around Chernobyl. French officials have protested, saying, "These documents were stolen from us. We intend to find who and why..."

Crimes, Punishments, & Rewards

The master of the former Canadian fishing vessel *Evan Richard* was charged with criminal negligence causing death for sailing towards Labrador while overloaded with construction materials, anchoring in a vulnerable place, having defective navigation equipment, and being without safety equipment. Two died when his vessel sank off Anticosti Island in September, 2003.

Four Filipino mariners received \$250,000 from the U.S. government for informing the U.S. Coast Guard about illegal practices on the 600' *Katerina*. Ships collect sizable amounts of oily wastes and these are supposed to be run through an Oil Water Separator. The water is then discharged into the ocean and the sludge should be properly disposed of onshore while the procedure should be logged.

But all too often the OWS is bypassed by a "magic pipe" and the oil-water mix ends up in the sea while the logbook receives faked entries. Three of the *Katerina*'s Filipino crew wrote a letter to the Coast Guard, complete with a diagram showing where the magic pipe was hidden, and they later involved the ship's cook who provided further details. As a result, charges were brought against the master, the chief and second engineers, and the company and a massive fine was imposed. Since the government considers that they "acted at great personal expense to their careers," three of the Filipinos received checks for \$75,000 each while the cook's check was for \$25,000. Big money in the Philippines!

A court in France fined a Norwegian chemical tanker \$390,000 for polluting while off the French coast in 2001. The master of the *Bow Chemical* will have to pay 10% of the fine while the owner pays the rest. One reason why ships are discharging oily wastes is because Mediterranean ports usually lack facilities for accepting such wastes. If France continues to crack down on offenders, shipping routes may move closer to North Africa.

The Greek ro/ro *Aegean Sun* broke a national ban by calling at Turkish-Cypriot ports and the owners paid a whopping \$6.6 million fine. However, authorities said the fine did not relate to political reasons but was the result of a long list of safety deficiencies and noncompliance with MARPOL requirements found when inspectors boarded the ship at Piraeus. The master was tried on misdemeanor charges and may also lose his license.

Nasty People

Piracy and possible terrorism aren't the only problems on the high seas. Organized illegal activities such as people smuggling and movements of drugs and arms are increasing, and much of it is probably part of a large global organized crime network, so said the Commander of the United Kingdom Maritime Force.

Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia are coordinating patrols in the Malacca Strait area and Malaysia said it would "reluctantly" allow armed escort vessels passage through Malaysia's portion of the Strait. But pirates still took masters and chief engineers of several ships and tugs hostage for ransom.

Building and Scrapping

China has started construction on what will be the world's largest shipbuilding yard to fulfill the central government's announced goal of being the world's leading shipbuilder. By 2015 the China State Shipbuilding Corp. should have an annual capacity of 8 million dwt. Work started by moving the Jiangnan Shipyard Corp. to make room for Shanghai Expo 2010.

VT Group told the British Government it could have hulls for the Royal Navy's new supply fleet of about 15 ships built in China cheaper than at home. The deal is worth about £2 billion and the MoD wants to sign a contract by year's end.

Rising prices, largely due to steel increases, have led Nippon Yusen Kaisha to hold back on further orders and it will add to its fleet largely by takeover deals.

Volkswagen said faster container ships will not deliver substantial economic gains in global supply chains given the present state of marine engine design.

Iran announced that its first domestically constructed ship should be launched this summer. So far the ship has cost more than \$700 million.

The ex-French aircraft carrier *Clemenceau* has been cleared by Indian authorities for scrapping on the beach at Alang. It is the first vessel to arrive decontaminated according to the Basel Convention, which governs trans-boundary movement of hazardous wastes (but which was never intended to apply to ships). The ship is 99% free of toxic materials but environmentalists said the war was far from being over.

Prices offered by Indian and Bangladesh scrappers for ships fell, matching drops in the price of recycled steel plate. Observers expect the trend to continue.

And lurking in the future are European-based "green" shipbreaking operations that will process much of the old shipping that presently ends up in the Far East.

But that won't happen quite yet. In the U.K., four ex-U.S. Navy auxiliaries lie in limbo. Legally they cannot be scrapped nor can they be towed back across the Atlantic. Their owner is shipbreaker Able UK. It has applied for the necessary permits from local authorities but environmental groups are fighting hard to stop Able's plans to build a £25 million scrapping drydock at Hartlepool, saying it could possibly destroy an internationally protected nature reserve, might stir up pollution, and would lead to unacceptable (to environmentalists) noise levels. Although the company provided a 350-page statement, it was denounced as not providing enough information.

The U.K. government wants a big share of the international ship scrapping business but must straddle the fence until the Hartlepool folk make up their minds whether they want the Able UK employment and what goes with it, or until other "green" yards spring up.

After two years of effort the Dutch Green shipbreaking firm Ecodock has received enough financial backing and is proceeding towards creating a "zero pollution" shipbreaking yard at Eemshaven in Holland. The firm is also willing to put up to £40 million into a U.K. yard and has been discussing the creation of a dismantling yard on the Tyne with the Dutch owner of the Swan Hunter shipyard. Ideally, 30 to 40 scrapping docks worldwide could eventuate. Will the peasants of Third World nations continue to have shipbreaking jobs on the beaches, or must they go back to their villages and poverty?


Odd Bits

The Australian livestock trade with Saudi Arabia, its largest customer, resumed nearly two years after the Corno Express incident of 2003. Shipments of sheep and goats will now be subject to stricter rules. Australia had already signed Memorandums of Understanding with Kuwait and the UAE and is seeking similar agreements with other Middle East countries.

A seafarer tripped and fell off the tanker *Barrington* off the north Queensland coast. Don't believe all those great white shark stories. He was picked up 13 hours later, very glad but exhausted and suffering from hypothermia.

Marine archeologists are racing to recover a Civil War submarine sunk off Panama. The *Marine Explorer* was built in Brooklyn just too late for the war but was then taken to Panama for pearl diving, using its lockout chamber.

A professional people smuggling crew shifted to another vessel when their boat's engine failed and left nearly 90 Peruvians and Ecuadoreans, all illegal emigrants, adrift. Luckily the old message-in-a-bottle trick worked. They came across a long-line fisherman's drift line and attached a bottle. Someone spotted the bottle, read the message in it, and rescuers appeared in due course. The emigrants became stranded on Costa Rica's Cocos Island while three governments discussed who should retrieve them.



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The seed for this piece was a small mistake in a wonderful article in *Messing About in Boats* ("Boat Building on a Greek Island," John Powell, p. 24, February 15, 2005). When I opened that issue I quickly spotted a picture of a familiar craft on Page 25, a Kometa ("Comet") hydrofoil... it was described as a "Russian" hydrofoil. The Kometa and its larger sister design, the Meteor, are not Russian craft, they are Georgian. They were designed and built when Georgia was a part of the Soviet Union. They were built in the city of Poti on the eastern shore of the Black Sea.

The article in question was particularly enjoyable for several reasons. One reason was that it had to do with the enjoyment of boats that are not one's own, a circumstance in which I often find myself. Mr. Powell's description of the enduring place of small boats in the culture of the island of Samos was quite absorbing. I also appreciated reading his impressions of those Soviet hydrofoils, I've wanted to ride on one since July 2000. I first encountered them during the time I lived in Georgia's capital, Tbilisi, from 2000 to 2001.

My career moves me to a new country every two or three years. Although there are many benefits to this lifestyle, it greatly curtails my ability to mess about in boats (I cannot take one with me when I move). In Georgia I had a developing fascination with boats which led to some entertaining experiences.

The weekend of July 4, 2000, was an adventurous one for me. I spent that Saturday (July 1st) visiting a large man-made body of water just east of Tbilisi, usually referred to as the "Tbilisi Sea." It was surrounded by beautiful, dry hills and it was originally created (under Stalin) as a combination reservoir and emergency ditching area for aircraft (Tbilisi's airport is a few kilometers to the south). Six old Volga personal hydrofoils existed at Tbilisi Sea in 1999, but three of those had been cut up for aluminum scrap during the winter of 1999-2000. I found one other Volga hydrofoil hull being used as the foundation for a snack stand at another local lake! If you want to rescue some beautiful industrial art (i.e., the Volga hydrofoils), Georgia might still be a good starting point. Those Volgas seated ten, had big V-8s, and did about 40 knots in smooth comfort (the V8s were Soviet, not the pinnacle of quality-control). You can find pictures of these fanta-

Messing About in Georgia

By Chris Tierjen

sy-inspiring craft at www.foils.org, along with pictures of Kometas, Meteors, and many others.

On Sunday (July 2nd) my friends and I drove halfway to the Black Sea, stopping in Kutaisi and visiting its stunning cathedral. Monday (July 3rd) was a big day, we went to look at the Soviet military airfield at Kopitnari, then toured the port and shipyard in Poti.

Kopitnari is an old combination civil airfield and Soviet tactical air base. It was rumored to have underground runways. We barged in and found that there was still a sort of National Guard base there. We wheeled a tour, thanks to one friend's Georgian government connections, but the soldier assigned to show us around was really a "minder," to keep us from seeing anything we weren't supposed to see. The military didn't have any functioning vehicles so we all piled into my station wagon and rolled off across the overgrown runways. Our soldier attempted to keep us from seeing anything interesting, but we kept shushing him and exploring the runways, hangers, and bunkers. We didn't find any of the fabled facilities, but we still had a great time discovering the above-ground runways and nuclear bomb-proof fighter hangers and bunkers with cows grazing everywhere. There were only a couple of MIGs left and we were kept away from them. It was quite an exciting visit all the same.

Two weeks earlier my best Georgian friend had told me that the shipyard in Poti had been in the business of building hydrofoils. I had to see them. This friend's stories had engendered the whole trip, actually, because it was also he who told me about the underground airfield. In any case, Monday afternoon found us in Poti, on the Black Sea coast. The friend with the government connections, an American working for President Shevardnaze, had strong connections in Poti. We were given a personal tour of the port by its Acting Director. It was an impressive facility. I felt that it could have a bright future if the railways and highways of the region could support it, but the volume it was able to handle had already exceeded the region's

infrastructure.

The Director of the shipyard gave us a personal tour of his facility. I climbed all over the dusty hydrofoil hulls on their gantries and then climbed on one in better condition in dry dock at the port. The craft I looked at were for sale and the shipyard was hoping for business reconditioning other hulls. After looking at the hydrofoils in Poti, we toured several ships, two oil tankers, and a tugboat. We drove back on the morning of Tuesday, July 4th, arriving in time for the U.S. Embassy's Independence Day celebration, where the aforementioned American friend, the one who worked for the Georgian President, was scheduled to sing the American national anthem.

Two weeks later I was invited to join another friend on his 24' sailboat on the Tbilisi Sea. He was a Georgian real estate expert and was involved in rehabilitating the Tbilisi Sea Marina following the three civil wars that wracked Georgia in the early 1990s. The boats at anchor had been machine-gunned and sunk by bored militants and most of the boats floating in the marina in 2000 were the result of many weekends of reconstruction. Tbilisi Sea is a wonderful body of water for sailing, very peaceful, with only a couple of boats on the water at any time. I remember having to dive into the water at the marina and swim to untie one of the lines from a buoy and having my foot hit the mast of a sunken boat just below the surface of the water. Also, the boat I sailed on had been acquired after the former owner passed away in an unfortunate incident involving its metal mast and low-hanging electrical wires across the downwind end of the lake.

A few months later, my sailing friend offered to take me to see a boat that some friends of his were building. We drove to the neighborhood where the University had had a couple of warehouses. There were some factories there and we parked by one of them. Typical of some former Soviet countries, the heavy manufacturing equipment had been stolen and sold as scrap metal. Only the heaviest pieces were still resting on the floor as they were too heavy to steal. Many of the panes in the 30' high windows had been broken. But inside this building was a special place.

As we walked in we were greeted by an intense middle-aged man with kind eyes, working on a half-completed homebuilt aircraft. A few yards further on, and closer to that wall of windows, was a finely sanded, beautifully rounded, 40' long hull made of plywood. My friend greeted the man working on her who invited us up the stepladder to the cockpit where he was working. He had built the entire thing himself with occasional help from friends. Like most people in Georgia, he had little money. The collapse of the Soviet Union had devalued his skills and robbed him of professional future... so he had built this boat of bartered and salvaged materials. The workmanship was excellent and she was solid as a tank. The hull and interior were largely complete. His dream was to sail around the world. Sadly, that dream made me think of the nightmares he would encounter with immigration authorities. Georgia is one of those countries whose citizens often have a hard time obtaining visas.

A little further along the floor of this fascinating building was another man who



had dreams of sailing around the world, but he wanted to set the record for doing so in the shortest craft ever. His boat was under 10' (3m) long. Viewed from the side the hull was square. Bow, stern, and the bottom of the keel were framed by two-by-fours and the hull form swelled within those limits. It was designed to be the ultimate self-righting craft, of course. His motivation was to beat the then standing record, which had been set by a Russian who sailed around the world in a three-meter boat. This boat was going to be a few inches shorter. As a Georgian, he just had to beat the Russians!

By June 2001 running in Tbilisi's parks had taken on too many security problems, too many kidnappings and attacks. I was looking for a new form of exercise and I discovered that Tbilisi's boathouse was right across the street from my workplace. So I took up sculling. I got a coach and trained there two to three times a week. They started me out in the "tank," stationary sculling sta-

tions with a pool of water built around them, and I progressed onto the water. It was an extremely pleasant way to get my dose of outdoors during the week, rowing up and down the filthy Mtkvari river, about which the city lives.

That is where I was on the evening of September 11 when the planes hit the Twin Towers. A beautiful sunset was beginning and I was rowing on the river when I was hailed by my coach. I spoke a few words of Russian and almost no Georgian, so he was shouting at me in Russian (every Georgian was forced to learn the Russian language in order to survive in the Soviet Union). "Krees! Krees!... (motioning emphatically for me to come in... Samolot! (i.e., "airplane")... World Treed Centurhh!... (bringing his hands together... BOOM!") So I came in to the river bank and went over to a TV that some men had jury-rigged by twisting the wires into an overhead electrical wire, and the Georgian national news was pirating

a direct news feed off of CNN, wildly shouting translations in Georgian of the reports as they came over in English in the background. And the world changed.

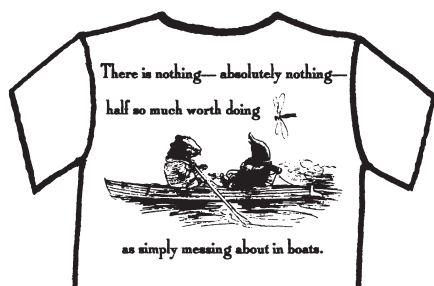
In the month that followed the wall in front of the U.S. Embassy was kept overflowing with flowers by well-wishers. The line of Georgians waiting to sign the condolences book was hundreds of people long for days. Many Americans do not realize the special relationship that exists between Georgia and the U.S.

With the Rose Revolution that occurred in December of 2003, Georgia continues to rebuild and improve. The security situation has improved a great deal since I was there, the economy is improving and the future is bright. It is one of the world's most beautiful and varied countries, an outdoor lover's paradise in many ways, and visiting is becoming progressively easier for adventurous outsiders.

A Kometa at its birthplace.



A Kometa being refurbished.



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New Zealand's Hamilton Jet Boats

By Ian Walker

At the Annual Classic Boat Show (a few photos are presented herewith) held again at our mountain Lake Rotoiti in March, I additionally took the enclosed photos of our New Zealand jet boats lined up on the shingle beach formed by a glacial moraine and on a flyby. These represent a significant part of our boating history, having been developed by a South Island farmer, Bill Hamilton, to get around the shallow rivers of his sheep farm carrying his sheep dogs for mustering back in the 1930s. This was the start of our Hamilton jet boats, built for a purpose by an amateur inventor.

The web has provided some additional info for *MAIB*. These braided rivers (newspaper photo shows this well) that are formed high in our backbone mountains are full of shingle and are too shallow for propeller driven craft.

The boats illustrated were factory built for recreational use back in the 1960s and '70s and are now prized possessions of a club whose members use the rivers for recreation with their families. The club saw fit to travel up to the Show to be represented this year.

Sir William Hamilton OBE (1899-1978)

“Innovator, Not Imitator”

As well as giving his name to the company he founded in 1939, C.W.F. (Bill) Hamilton left a legacy of combining sound engineering practices with innovation and excellence. As a small boy he had dreamed of a boat that would carry him up the swift flowing rivers of his homeland. Such foresight was typical of this distinguished New Zealand inventor and innovator. In 1954 his dream became a reality, and in the 50 years since the Hamilton Waterjet has revolutionized the world of conventional boating.

A humble man, Sir William often claimed that it was not he who invented the waterjet, that honour he attributed to the great mind of Archimedes. His greatest achievement was to improve the idea and make it work in the specialized field of boat propulsion.

Charles William Feilden Hamilton was born at Ashwick Station near Fairlie (South Island, New Zealand) on July 26, 1899. He was educated at Waihi School, Winchester, and later at Christ's College, Christchurch. But it was to Ashwick that he owed the education that encouraged his naturally inventive mind. The land provided him with the opportunity to best exploit his unique style of mechanical genius.

In 1921 Bill Hamilton bought the 10,000 hectare Irishman Creek Station, one of the most notable sheep and cattle runs in the Mackenzie Country (Central Otago). Here he quickly established his first workshop, forerunner to the Hamilton Group of Companies.

His first project was the construction of a two hectare dam for a hydroelectric plant to provide power for the station's homestead and workshop. Conventional earth moving scoops proved inadequate so, in typical Hamilton fashion, he invented his own more



efficient model. This scoop, the "I.C. Excavator," was used extensively for local contract work, with several more being manufactured and sold in New Zealand and Britain.

Essentially a self-taught engineer, Sir William spent countless evenings at his drawing board doodling and designing. While he approached problems in an unorthodox way, he always produced machines consistent with the best engineering practices.

The Irishman Creek workshop also became an engineering training facility during the Second World War. Here Sir William taught many unskilled men to do high-precision work, with the workshop producing munitions as well as earthmoving equipment.

Towards the end of the war, Sir William was required to make one of the most crucial decisions of his life. The increasing demand for agricultural and earthmoving equipment and machinery presented him with the choice of working within the limitations imposed at Irishman Creek, or expanding. Never one to ignore a challenge, he decided to rent a small works building in Bath Street, Christchurch, and match the keen demand for his machines.

Steady expansion continued and in 1948 Sir William purchased a 10 hectare site at Middleton, Christchurch. A 465 square meter factory was constructed for the production of bulldozers, scrapers, excavators, and hydraulic machinery.

The shift to Christchurch allowed the Irishman Creek workshop to become solely a research and development center. This provided the opportunity to devote resources to



the development of the Hamilton Waterjet. Sir William's first jetboat was a 3.6m (12') plywood hull with a 100 E Ford engine, and the jet a centrifugal type pump. This craft was tested on the Irishman Creek dam and water race before successfully, if somewhat slowly, travelling up the Waitaki River in early 1954. From then on Sir William and his team gradually improved the design of the waterjet, adding greater efficiency, power, and speed.

Continual improvements in the waterjet design, particularly the shift to a multi-stage axial flow pumping system, allowed boats to travel to places that had never been accessible before. In 1960, Sir William's son Jon was a key member of the Colorado River expedition team, the first to travel up through the Grand Canyon. Over the next 20 years

other ground-breaking trips were made up the Sun Kosi (Nepal), Sepik (Papua, New Guinea), Zaire, Ganges, and Amazon Rivers, and jet-boats became widely used for flood relief, surveying, and recreation.

Before his death in 1978, Bill Hamilton was recognized for his services to manufacturing with a knighthood. In 1990 he was inducted into the New Zealand Sports Hall of Fame, and in 2004 he was inducted into the New Zealand Business Hall of Fame.

Sources:

Wild Irishman: The Story of Bill Hamilton, by Peggy Hamilton. Published by A.H. & A.W. Reed (ISBN 0 589 01294 0).

The Jet Boat: The Making of a New Zealand Legend, by Anne and Les Bloxham. Published by A.H. & A.W. Reed (ISBN 0 589 01453 6).

A Short Portfolio of Boat Show Photos



This past year I got a call from one reader who read my column about my Coast Guard year in Alaska. He said that he had also served on the USCG cutter *Storis*. We had a great talk comparing notes about our old ship. He reminded me of things that I had forgotten about my tour.

I spent a good part of that summer in the Bering Sea. In the summer this sea fills with fishing boats from many nations. Prior to the '60s the U.S. had a treaty with Russia, Japan, and Canada to maintain our rights to the eastern part of this sea. One of the duties of the *Storis* was to enforce our rights to these waters. We spent about a month sailing along that line keeping everyone on their own side of the line. Before we departed on our Bering Sea Patrol we constructed a flight deck on the stern of the *Storis*. This deck came up to the height of the bulwark, giving us a flat platform on which we could carry a small helicopter. The chopper would allow us to see far over the horizon.

On this patrol we crisscrossed the Bering Sea a lot. We landed on St. Laurence Island for a deer hunt and we visited the Pribilof Islands, where all the fur seals from all over the Pacific come to breed, a perfect place to hunt fur seals. At that time the U.S. government was running a butcher shop on the Pribilofs and we went ashore to visit them. We kept a better control on the poaching by doing all the harvesting ourselves.

One morning we were standing by a Maru (a Japanese factory ship) that was the center of a small fleet of trawlers and other assorted work boats. We lowered our motor whaleboat and paid a visit to one of the trawlers. A ship's lieutenant and a translator went on board the trawler to check on their

Bering Sea Patrol

By Mississippi Bob

books.

The seas were calm and we stayed tied alongside and watched their crew sorting out the catch, halibut that ranged from 10lbs to 50lbs or more. The crew was standing waist deep in fish. They would grab a fish with a stevedore hook and fling it into a open hatch as far as 20' away.

Someone broke out a pack of American cigarettes and suddenly all work stopped. The Japanese crew came over to the side where we were tied and removed their gloves and southwester. You should have seen some surprised hooligans, these Japanese were all women. They had no problem smoking American cigarettes. I have often tried to visualize my girl back home slinging halibut around.

American cigarettes, we learned, were always a good trade item. Any time we tied up along side a Japanese vessel someone was ready to barter and our smokes seemed to be the prize. We bought them for 10¢ a pack back then.

We spent the summer cruising back and forth along the treaty line. Our chopper would occasionally spot a boat on the wrong side of the line but by the time the *Storis* got there at 15 knots they were well back on their own side. The weather stayed good the whole time we were there and I'm glad because the Bering Sea is very shallow and a storm can kick up some killer waves in a hurry.

A bunch of the crew went ashore on St. Laurence Island for a deer hunt armed with all types of assorted military fire arms. Every gun was checked out of the armory and it was a blessing that no one got killed by friendly fire. The hunt had been requested by the state to reduce the deer overpopulation on

this island. Our crew reduced the population by a dozen. Not much for all the guys on the hunt. A dozen deer when butchered made one meal for our crew.

I was one of the crew members who got to go ashore on the Pribilofs. We landed to get a look at how the seal harvest was handled. Fur seals from all over the Pacific came there to have their young and breed. Big bulls, called beach masters, come ashore and stake out a territory to set up a harem. The younger, smaller bulls will have to wait for another year. The beach masters are twice the size of the females or their rivals. No one bothers them. No one bothers the females or the calves either but the poor young bulls got the axe. About 90% of them got killed and butchered each year. This harvest may seem brutal, and it was, but it didn't reduce the population of fur seals. An old beach master could easily breed 50 cows in his harem. The extra young bulls were just that, extras.

As we wandered around the village we came upon a pair of umiaks. These are native skin boats used by both the Eskimo and the Aleut Indians. I always wondered where these folks found the wood to build the frames of their boats, none grows on these islands. I found it amazing how much these native craft resembled the dories of the western world. The design evolved from Stone Age people.

The umiaks provided the men a platform for hunting whales and walrus. They also served as boats that could move families from island to island. The ones that I saw had modern outboards mounted on bumpkins on their sterns. These natives would make some pretty daring trips in these boats. I guess it was better than going onto the open sea in kayaks.

I found this trip to be very interesting and a fun part of my life. All too soon we were headed back to Kodiak and other duties.

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Coming from Havre

From Ed Cass: Source Hawaiian government owned newspaper, *The Polynesian*, December 20, 1851

In coming from Havre we were obliged, by the darkness of the night and a thick fog, to anchor some five or six miles from Cowes. In the morning the early tide was against us and it was dead calm. At 9:00 a gentle breeze sprang up, and with it came gliding down the *Laverock* one of the newest and best cutters of her class. The news spread like lightning that the Yankee clipper had arrived and that the *Laverock* had gone down to show her the way up.

The yachts and vessels in the harbor, the wharves, and the windows of all the houses bordering on them were filled with thousands of spectators, watching with eager eyes the eventful trial they saw we could not escape, for the *Laverock* stuck to us, sometimes lying to, and sometimes tacking around us, evidently showing she had no intention of quitting us. We were loaded with extra sails, beef, pork, and bread, enough for an East India voyage, and were some four or five inches too deep in the water. We got up our

sails with heavy hearts, the wind had increased to a five or six knot breeze and, after waiting until we were ashamed to wait longer, we let her get about 200 yards ahead and then started in her wake.

I have seen and been engaged in many exciting trials at sea and on shore... dread I felt at the thought of being beaten by the *Laverock* in this eventful trial. During the first five minutes not a sound was heard, save perhaps the beating of our anxious hearts or the slight ripple of water upon our sword-like stem. The captain was crouched down upon the floor of the cockpit, his seemingly unconscious hand upon the tiller with his stern, unaltering gaze upon the vessel ahead. The men were motionless as statues with their eager eyes fastened upon the *Laverock* with a fixity and intensity that seemed almost unnatural. The pencil of an artist might perhaps convey the expression, but no words can describe it. It could and did not last long.

We worked quickly and surely to windward of her wake. The crisis was past and some dozen of deep-drawn sighs proved that the agony was over. We came to anchor a quarter, or perhaps a third, of a mile ahead, and 20 minutes after our anchor was down the Earl of Wilton and his family were on board to welcome and introduce us to his friends.



In My Shop #5

By Mississippi Bob

I returned from the Rend Lake Mess-about with the kick start that I needed to get back to work on my own projects. I took a good look and worked out a work plan.

The first thing that I had to do was help another builder glass the deck of his motorboat, I had gotten a call from a builder, Cliff Britten, who had built a replica of a early 1900s motorboat from a photo that caught his fancy. He had done a very nice job, too. He wanted the deck to stay bright and didn't want to mess that up so he hired me to help him with this step. The deck job went fairly well and he was happy so it was time to get back to my shop.

I wanted to splash my boat but it needed a deck first. I had to install the deck beams before the deck went on but I was still thinking about how they should be installed. The beams had been made already, cut from 9mm plywood. I used the deck template for the pattern and drew the curve that matched all the other deck supports. These beams were just over 1" in height. This dimension made them a 1/4" larger than the sheer clamp. I didn't want to trim them any thinner so I had to get inventive.

I cut small gussets from some scrap 3mm ply and epoxied one to the bottom of each end of each beam. When they were cured I fitted them, with the aid of my big disk sander (very handy tool), into their proper places just flush with the top edge of the sheer clamp and glued them in place with some thickened epoxy and let that cure overnight.

First Splash. Testing for CG.



The next day I did a fillet with more thickened epoxy making sure that I filled the gap between the top of the gusset and the bottom of the sheer clamp. I double tabbed all the ends at this time and, when cured, the beams were in to stay.

I needed something to support the side decks so I sprung a 2" piece of 4mm between the forward and aft bulkheads on each side to get the curve that would give me a support for 5" wide side decks. Once I had the pattern made I cut three more and laminated two thicknesses in place with short sections of deck beams. This made fairly strong beams. When the coamings were installed they would help reinforce these rails. I managed to get these rails installed in one operation. I had spent enough time on this stage.

This may seem like a lot of messing around, and I admit that it was, but the deck beams were now in and I could complete the fairing of the sheer line and deck beams. I went back to my deck template to keep check of the shape. Some planning, some work with the belt sander, and I was ready to fasten the deck.

The deck went on much as one would do on a kayak. It got epoxied and nailed with boat nails. I started with the stern, the smaller section, then did the bow. I had to let that cure before fitting the side decks but all this went together okay.

With the deck on I was getting fired up. I epoxied everything in sight and the boat was ready to splash. No, I didn't say it was done but it was time to see it in the water. I wanted to find out where the seats should go for solo and with a passenger.

I whipped up some temporary outriggers for the oars that could be held on with C clamps, found my bullet level, and headed to the lake with the boat on a trailer. My 200lb son Paul met me at the lake and we splashed her. No name, no ceremony. She went into the water and floated like a cork. She didn't float so high when I got my 170lbs in there, but with Paul on the beach eyeballing the trim I slid my seat aft until he said both ends were equally above the water.

I mounted my bullet level, shimmed and taped to the bottom, then rowed about a little. I confirmed the fact that a skeg would be needed and went ashore to get Paul. I gave him the seat and he moved it all the way aft in the cockpit. I moved my weight forward until the level said enough. The level told me what I had suspected all along, my tandem seat would be on the forward deck. The forward

seat, on the deck, was pretty well where I had planned it to be. The deck was quite strong at that point as I would be on top of the center board trunk.

I rowed about with both of us on board. It handled the load but it no longer floated like a cork. The temporary outriggers were failing badly. I had made them of 1/4" ply but they lasted for the test. The boat didn't track well at all but now I knew what I had to do to make it lakeworthy.

Back at the shop I still had a lot of work to do before I could think about paint.



Deck beams and gusset tabbed in.



All the framing in, ready for the deck.

All deck parts cut, ready for installation.





The title is the Latin name of a prehistoric shark that fascinated one of my customers, Keith. He wanted me to build him a boat suitable for his hobby of fossil hunting along the Chesapeake Bay and other locations. Fossil collection is very popular in the mid-Bay region, about 50 miles south of Annapolis.

The Chesapeake Bay did not exist during the Miocene Era (about 12-15 million years ago) and the area was shallow ocean. When Miocene era shellfish, sharks, crocodiles, whales, and other creatures died, their remains often settled on the bottom and became covered with clay and silt. Gradually these layers of clay thickened by sedimentation and the remains became fossilized. The cliffs that line the Western side of the middle of the bay now contain the remains of these oceanic inhabitants in several distinct layers.

The fossil layers are evident to the casual observer and were even noted by Captain John Smith when he sailed the Chesapeake in the early 1600s. Interestingly, he correctly concluded that the area must have been sea bottom and that the multiple layers resulted from previous variations in sea level. The cliffs became exposed when the Susquehanna River carved out the core of the Chesapeake. In some areas, the fossils tumble down to the beach and are scooped up by sharp-eyed collectors. Shark teeth, in particular, are found in the shallows or on the beach during the extremely low tides that occur in mid-winter. Some of these teeth are 4" to 6" across and came from sharks the size of a bus.

The requirements for a fossil hunter's rowboat seemed easy enough to fulfill, but the devil is in the details as they say. Keith wanted to row for exercise, occasionally taking his wife and dog along, and wanted the boat to be suitable for cartopping. So it had to be lightweight, easy to row, but rugged enough to be beached regularly on unfamiliar shores. As is often the case, there were too many choices and we had to narrow the field. I pulled out a sheaf of study plans and made some suggestions, including that he review some of the plans listed on my website (www.sobs.us).

A number of customers exhibit interest in building a boat in my shop but then life intervenes. I expected the same from the fos-

Squalicorax

By Ken Spring

sil hunter and his wife, but was pleasantly surprised when they returned with some firm ideas about what they wanted. After some additional discussion we settled on Whisp, a sharpie skiff designed by Steve Redmond. This is a shallow draft, lapstrake, hard-chine, flat bottom boat 15'7" long with a 41" beam and a design weight of 68lbs. Redmond's design utilizes glued lap construction with three broad strakes on each side. The calculated displacement is over 600lbs so I felt confident that it could handle the weight of two adults.

There were, however, some interesting complications. Keith wanted forward-facing rowing and he has an unusual physique. He is a devoted weight lifter who has built his 5'4" frame up to the point where he weighs 220lbs. So now I had to build a forward-facing rowboat that would not be destroyed by his powerful arms, yet still be lightweight enough to be transported on a car roof.

The forward-facing rowing was the first challenge. Keith wanted to see where he was going, particularly when he was approaching the shoreline in the fossil-rich areas. These tend to be regions with a great deal of debris in the shallows. The debris include trees and brush that fall from the cliffs during storms, lumps of rock-hard petrified clay, old crab pots, etc. After some consultation, we settled on the E-Z Row system from Mike Nesseth in Minnesota. This system has a pin that fits into the oarlock socket and a rail that extends along the gunwale, ending in a clamp that attaches the apparatus to the gunwale. It is lightweight, about 10lbs per side, reasonably priced, and constructed of corrosion-resistant stainless steel and anodized aluminum.

A couple of features of the E-Z Row were important in this application. The oars could be readily shipped, backing was easy because they did not feather, and the position of the rowing system was adjustable along the 43" rail so that the rower could compensate for the weight of a passenger (or passenger and dog) without having to move the apparatus. I decided on a straddle type seat for the rower to compensate for the weight of a passenger aft.

Keith's reach is only about 14" so his rowing strokes are relatively short but extremely powerful. I worried that so much power would tear the gunwales off the boat, so I beefed them up considerably. I constructed them from ash, 1-3/8" x 1-1/2". Keith and I were concerned about the poor tracking and pounding of a flat bottom boat in the short

chop of the Chesapeake. I suggested achieving a finer entry by extending the stem about 4" and constructing a forefoot.

In addition, I strengthened the bottom considerably by adding a full-length keelson with a stem apron and stern knee. The bottom was then constructed from 6mm okoume plywood coated with xynole fabric and epoxy on the inside before installation. The halves of the bottom were nailed to the keelson rabbet with bronze boat nails and "tortured" to conform to the redesigned stem. The bottom was sealed to the topsides with 4" fiberglass tape and subsequently covered with 6oz fiberglass cloth and epoxy.

The bottom, transom, gunwales, and cockpit sole were then coated with epoxy filled with aluminum oxide barrier coat to increase their resistance to abrasion and to provide both UV protection as well as a moisture barrier. The rest of the hull was epoxy saturated and then painted white with high gloss marine polyurethane. The outer stem was constructed of ash and got three layers of fabric to improve its strength and impact resistance. The result was not yacht quality, but a workboat finish. The final weight was 89lbs without the rowing system, the increased weight was clearly due to the heavier scantlings and design changes.

A couple of points about the construction sequence deserve mention. Steve Redmond suggests building the boat upright, gluing the topside planks together on a flat surface, and gluing the chine stringers to them before attachment to the stem and transom.

I could not build a boat this way. More than 50 years of boatbuilding experience has made me inflexible. A boat should be built upside down; the chine stringers should be attached before the topside planking goes on; a boat should be constructed on a strongback with forms for the stem and transom. I could not do it any other way. I was psychologically incapable of following his instructions. As the pictures show, the boat turned out fine despite my inner turmoil.

Launching day was an extraordinarily mild January afternoon. The Chesapeake was calm, the wind was light, and the temperature around 50 degrees. I convinced Keith to call in sick from work and we rowed around in circles. A couple of neighbors also showed up to try their hand at "backwards" rowing. It required some mental and physical adjustments to turn correctly and stay on course. The boat trimmed out as expected, rowed easily even with two of us aboard, and looked very salty. Although they have been sleeping peacefully for over 12 million years, the fossils now have to be on red alert because *Squalicorax* is once again on the prowl.

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Canoeing on the Charles – 1912



I love rowing, unlike most of my friends who consider that it's a chore that has to be done only when the outboard motor refuses to start. But the very same people are often keen hikers or ride mountain or touring bikes or go to the gym and pay others to supervise their self-torture. Strange people.

It took a while to realize that what they disliked and what I so enjoy are very different. Now "how's that?" I hear you say, a pair of oars, a boat, and some water, what's so different? Their boats (and that's usually a kind overstatement for a horrid, poorly maintained little barge) are different, the oars are different, and the water is theoretically the same but the boat uses it differently.

In order to be comfortable rowing, a good fit is needed. The boat, its seat, footrests, and oars should fit at least as well as those fancy shoes that the sports shoe clinic with its video screen and treadmill sell you. It's not so easy to do that, but here are some ideas.

I like fixed seat boats and they are the simple ones that suit open water as well as those flat calms that early morning and late evenings see. So it's those boats like Joansa, the Light Dory, and Walkabout that I'm talking about here. Fixed seats, that seat should be about 6" or 8" above your heels when ready to row. With your footrest in the right position that means that much of your weight will be taken on the large muscles under your thighs rather than those pointy bones in your pelvis so you can be a lot more comfortable. At that height the angle between shin and thigh, thigh and back is comfortable, the long muscles at about medium extension when under load, and nothing will be strained or overstretched leading to sore spots.

The footrest, especially in a boat that will be used in rough water, and that's not necessarily very rough either, needs to have your feet at least a foot apart. The conventional footrest with the feet right side by side comes from a competition boat that is so narrow that a skinny rower's behind overhangs both sides and we need the bracing effect more than that racer does. The other benefit here is that when really pulling hard (c'mon Fred, he's catching up!) the knees can flex apart when bending the torso forward to take a long stroke which eases the stress on the lower back.

The positioning of the rowlocks, apart from the technical aspects of them, is critical. Make them more than 3'10" apart minimum. This is because the narrower spacing causes the wrist to be flexed though too much of an angle when the oar is swung through a long stroke. If you hold your hands out with the

Some Thoughts On Rowing

By John Welsford

forearms parallel with your desktop and hands holding an imaginary oar handle in each, then push your hands away from you, then back to your sides, you will notice that the hands "axis" or angle changes as though it is following the oar in its pivot. The natural radius of that pivot for most medium sized people gives a rowlock spacing of about 4'4" which is wider than most fixed seat small boats. Four inches works well but, as I said, not less than 3'10" or the wrists get sore.

Those rowlocks should be about 8" above your seat in a light boat but can be as much as 11" above if the boat is large and heavy. You will note that the whaleboats and pilot gigs, of which you see pics in glossy magazines, are rowed with hands right up at chest height to give more leverage, but this is a difficult style to get used to and not really relevant to our sort of use.

A rowlock is positioned in two axes, height being one and the other is the distance aft of the rower. I set mine up with the pivot point about 13" aft of the after edge of my seat. That puts my upper arms vertical with my back straight and the oars dead straight across. Don't bring them any closer than that, but you could put them an inch or so further away if that feels right.

Rowlocks should have NO slop. They should turn freely and smoothly, and I go to the trouble of fitting self lubricating plastic bushes held into hardwood mountings with bronze plates. It's worth putting in some time here as otherwise they wear very quickly and a sloppy shaft makes them pretty awful to use.

The oars' balance is very important. I have mine so that the tip just sits in the water with the full weight of my hand and fore-arm on the handle. If it's balanced right the action of the return stroke pushes the oar clear of the water without having to actually lift it. The first time you use a pair set up like this they will feel odd, but I can guarantee that after a few minutes anything else will feel like a pair of two-by-four planks with lead weights on the ends.

Balancing them is not easy, it requires a lot of material to be removed from the blades, 1/4" thick is plenty for the blade edges and a rib should be left down the mid-dle. I leave that ridge as a point sticking out

from the end of the blade, it looks cute and gives me something to push the boat off with without damaging the thinned down blade.

I also use the old fashioned plumber's sheet lead as a counterweight, about 1/8" thick and in this case about 4" wide around the shaft right in by the handle. Don't overdo it from a balance point of view and do paint it to protect yourself, lead is poisonous.

Oar shafts (we are talking about commercially made oars here) are heavy parallel lumpish things and don't recognize that as a lever, they need to be strong at the pivot end and can be light where they enter the blade. You can plane that end down to about 1-1/4"x1-1/8" with the longer dimension at right angles to the blade and take that dimension gradually tapering back up to the leather where the rowlock is.

The blade shape, you will note in your pics of historic working craft, is seldom wide. In fact, the Faroese and Shetlanders, the West Coast Irish, and the Cornishmen, all famous open water rowers in their various boats, used very narrow blades and thole pins which allowed no feathering of the oar. So I use a narrow blade, about 3-1/4" only, on my own boats the blades are fairly long at 32" but narrow and no, I don't feather them either. A rowing cruise which may take me several days at six hours or so a day would leave my forearms in rigidly cramped agony if I had to feather the oars every stroke. I used to feather nicely when I thought that someone was watching, but don't even bother with that any more.

Buttons that bulge or rest on the oar, which stops it from sliding out through the rowlock, I don't use 'em. What I do, though, is put a lanyard around the neck of the oar down by the blade, up around the rowlock shaft and back about 18" to a lightweight tent rope adjuster. If it blows up I need to row with more oar inboard to change to a lower gear so just slide it in and take up the slack on the tent rope adjuster (the gear ratio is the ratio between the oar inboard and outboard of the rowlock, more inboard is for going upwind and more outboard for downwind. Just like your 10-speed bike (or in my case I think my bike has about 21 speeds) but you get the picture.

For leathers, I use heavy split chrome leather shiny side out, contact glued to the shaft and herringbone stitched along the seam. The seam is handed up and aft where the least contact with the rowlock is and the leather should be at least 14" long centered about halfway relative to the rowlock.

I have tried all shapes of oar handles and don't like any of the fancy ones. I use

In my own Joansa.



Wayne Chittenden in Light Dory.



straight and parallel ones (runs out and measures them) 37mm diameter and 145mm long. I set the oar up at the right pitch and see where my thumb fits under the grip and sandpaper a little flat there so the second joint of my thumb fits comfortably against the flat when the oar is at the right pitch. I have damaged my right hand a bit (cut tendons on little and next fingers, they are all hooked back up but not as strong as they were) so have customized that grip a bit to suit but otherwise don't like barrel shapes, tapers a la Pete Culler or oval shaped grips.

Seat, the coccyx is not only an odd thing to find the correct spelling for, it's very, very painful if damaged. And a poor seat can rub the skin off your tailbone after a day or three at the oars, so I have taken the soft closed cell

Seagull.



foam from an old lifejacket and cut the area where the tailbone is away completely and glued to the foam a covering of natural sheepskin from an old rug. Note to those who don't live in New Zealand or Australia, a sheepskin rug is one of life's real luxuries. Come and visit New Zealand and take one home with you, if you don't do anything else while you are here just that will make it worth the trip.

Boats are preferably long, light, and fairly slim. They can be simple, you can build them yourself and there are lots of different kinds to pick from. Each type has its fans but each type is suited to a slightly different use and environment. Ask an informed designer for suggestions and be prepared to answer a few questions. Again, it need not be

complex, and in my opinion the considerable benefits for the modest investment of time and money are considerable.

There is a lot to this rowing thing but, unlike most sports, you can do it all yourself. Fixed seat recreational rowing has not attracted the high profile fakers and big money that many other sports have, it's not hard to get it right, and you can enjoy the feeling of your body working perfectly in harmony with a machine that takes you to paradisaical places. Has to be good for both body and soul.

John Welsford, Designer. www.jwboatdesigns.co.nz <<http://www.jwboatdesigns.co.nz>> jwboatdesigns@xtra.co.nz [mailto: jwboatdesigns@xtra.co.nz](mailto:jwboatdesigns@xtra.co.nz)


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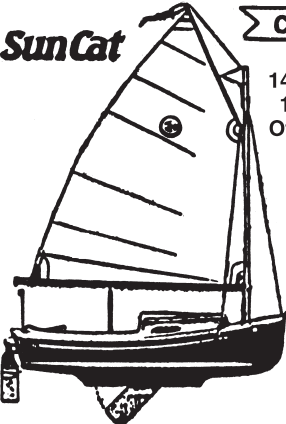


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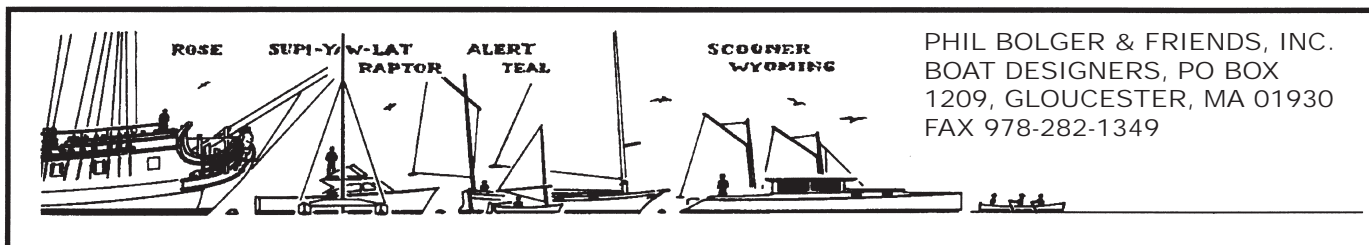
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Messing About readers will be familiar with Birdwatcher and her capabilities. I hope a good many will have read Mason Smith's inspired article in *WoodenBoat* #179 of August, 2004, describing his conversion to the principle. The experience part of all this was with the original design with the jib headed cat rig. It was as simple as I could make it, hull and especially the rig. It worked with only three controlling lines; the sheet, the snotter, and, an afterthought, a line spiraling around the mast which could gather a panel at the luff of the sail in to the mast to reduce the area in strong wind.

This rig had numerous advantages. The semi-permanent attachment of the sail to the mast and elimination of a halyard allowed the mast to be very slender at the top, reducing the weight aloft and improving the aerodynamics of the narrow head of the sail. The sail rolled neatly in to the mast, making a compact stow when the mast and sail were laid in the chocks on deck. If the mast was left standing the sail was entirely out of the way. There was very little cordage and only two blocks.

I like to look for things that can be eliminated, as opposed to an apparent majority who like to look for things that can be added to improve the working. The austere rig (dark-hull sail plan) did have numerous drawbacks. The area was small for ghosting in light airs. In strong winds it was strenuous to furl, and when it was furled it was apt to get loose at the top and flog nastily if the mast was left standing. And the 23-1/2' mast with sail attached was a very heavy lift to step and unstep, precarious even though it was done standing hip-deep in the standing room. The reefing system, though there were precedents for it in some leg o' mutton work-

Bolger on Design Birdwatcher With Solent Lug Rig

boat types, produced poor aerodynamics on account of the bunch up at the luff, and poor helm balance because it moved the reduced sail forward. It served for reaching and running, but the windward performance was poor. It was also not very secure.

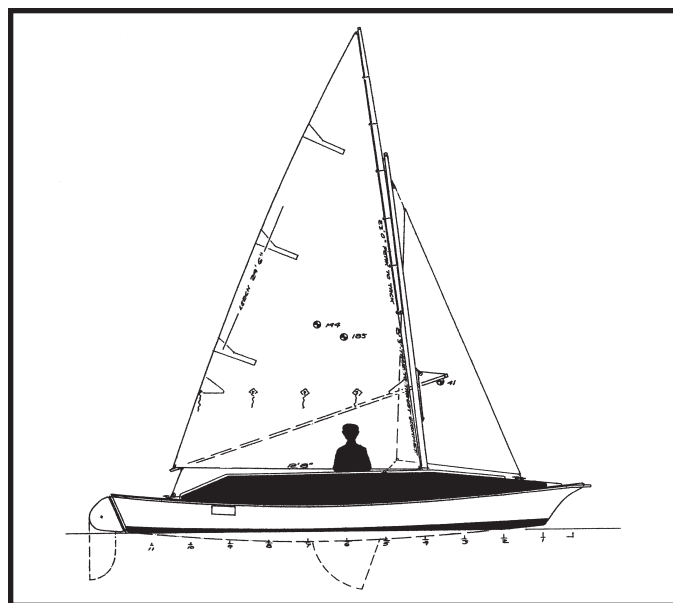
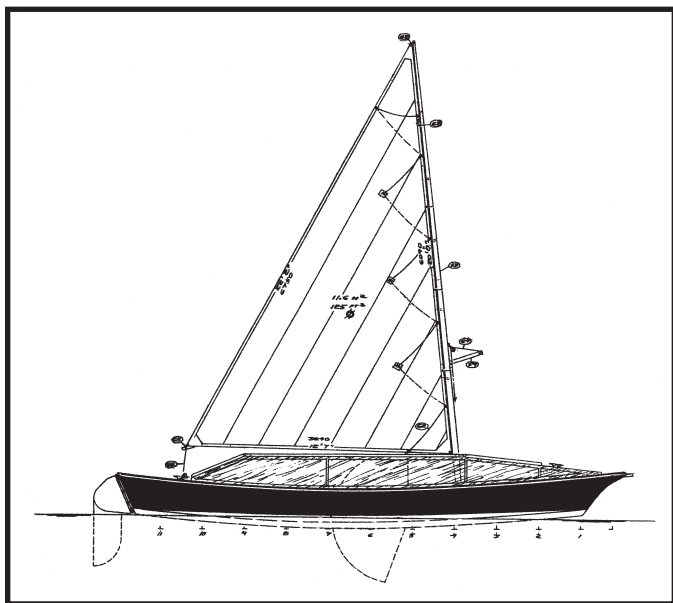
Somebody, I think Aeneas Precht in Saskatchewan, asked me to design a sloop rig with a halyard. This was the light-colored hull sail plan shown here, and with some further changes was carried over to our elaborated Birdwatcher II design. Mason sold his Birdwatcher I and bought a sloop-rigged version, built very truly to the original design and extremely well finished. He offered to meet us on Lake Champlain to try out the sloop rig and give us his early experience with it. The weather did not cooperate very well, drizzling rain and almost no wind (though, in fact, we lucked out as there were heavy thunderstorms both before and after the session with the boat), but it was highly rewarding all the same.

Most people will agree that the sloop rig is prettier, is, in fact, a handsome boat. It has 185sf of sail to the cat rig's 125sf and the peak of the mainsail is 2' higher. In Birdwatcher II, with a ballasted centerboard and some other added weight, the increase is to 213sf. In the fitful zephyrs we had, the difference was very noticeable, the boat gained steerage way in hardly perceptible slants.

Mason tells us that she can carry this rig in most sailing weather and that she's faster on all points. He described one sail in which he made good ten statute miles dead to windward in two-and-a-half hours single-handed, which is good sailing by any ordinary standard. I thought the cat-rigged boat went very well, but I only sailed her in good sailing breezes. In that thrash to windward, Mason had water showing on the glass raised deck sides most of the time; that is, very sharply heeled, but she was not stopped at all and dealt with the choppy water efficiently.

I'd been a little uneasy about the effect of the higher rig with more weight high up on her ability to recover from a knock-down flat on her side or further, but Mason says she comes back up perfectly reliably, though without some of the spectacular power in her recovery of the original arrangement. She has enough reserve stability to handle the weight of the solid 15' yard and wet sail. The sloop's reefing system, of course, is a great improvement; she goes well on all points in strong wind with reefed main with or without the jib. A great advantage of the Solent rig is that there's no bare mast above a reefed sail. Taking 3-1/2' off the top of the mast and relieving it of the weight of the sail, tames the effort of stepping and unstepping the mast. It's now well within the strength of a reasonably fit adult.

The drawbacks of the rig, aside from being higher and heavier (and more expensive) are that it has several more controlling lines to handle and keep in order and that the mainsail has to be furled and stowed separately from the mast. The jib is roller-furling and no trouble, but the mainsail and its yard lower in loose heaps which have to be organized and furled. They're easily gathered into



the standing room as they're lowered out of the wind, but it's a minor chore to get them bundled back to the mast in its deck chocks or on deck by itself if the mast is left standing.

The yard, hanging free on its single halyard, has to be grabbed and hauled in-board as it comes down and would start to be a hazard in a much bigger rig than this one. We talked of how lazy jacks might be arranged and whether jaws and a parrel on the heel of the yard would be practical, but so far with no clear conclusions; we'll have some ideas in a future issue. The Solent rig was originally developed for racing with strong crews so the history of the rig is not helpful. It was used in racing boats up to the 6-meter class with over 500sf of sail.

It has bothered Mason that the yard is designed to hang vertically with the hoist of the sail in line with the head; that is, the sail is triangular. It takes considerable tension at the tack of the sail to produce this effect and the heel of the yard still has a tendency to slip forward alongside the mast, distorting the sail at the throat. We discussed giving the sail a slight angle at the throat to allow for this. The result would amount to a very high-peaked standing lug. Alternatively, it would seem that jaws on the yard are a possibility. Hauling the tack down hard works well enough to make a solution not very urgent.

The jib will blow around the projecting end of the sprit boom in tacking but it looks as though it was being chafed as it does so, so Mason likes to pass it around by hand when somebody is free to do it. The sprit boom is

necessary to save heads with the deck-sweeping foot of the sail. Commodore Munroe used to use an offset jaw on the heel of a sprit boom, with tension adjusted by raising and lowering it on the mast to avoid the fouling of the jib. This should work here given some experience, but the design boom is less vulnerable to damage and not enough of a problem to be in a hurry to change it. The mast is stiff enough to let the jib stand reasonably well without shrouds or backstays, as proved by that fast sail to windward. Of course, close-hauled like that, the tension from the clew of the sail across to the halyard tends to hold the mast against the pull of the jib, and once you start off to a reach it matters less if the luff of the jib develops some sag.

Mason is sold on the rig in principle, and the more thinking about improving it, the better. He plans to experiment with heaving-to, cutter style, with the full or reefed mainsail sheeted nearly flat and the jib backed with the weather side sheet to hold the boat steady at a near standstill. We've seen this done in a real cutter, backing the forestaysail. It works just as described in old seamanship books and is a very useful maneuver. Whether it will work in a very shallow sharpie sloop remains to be seen. There's no equivalent possible in a cat-rigged boat. Overall Mason considers her a very fast boat, satisfying for even just a two hour day sail, much of it out of the sun.


We continue to think that this class, and several derivatives of it, have a great future. Plans of Birdwatcher I, our Design #496, are

available for \$150 to build one boat. Plans of the elaborated Birdwatcher II, Design #496-B, with provision for a motor and other upgrades, are \$175 to build one, from: Phil Bolger & Friends, Inc., P.O. Box 1209, Gloucester, MA 01930.



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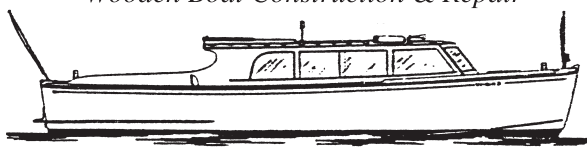


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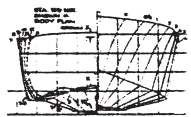
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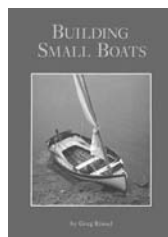
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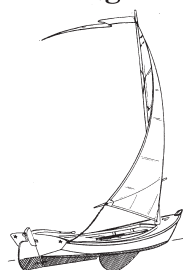
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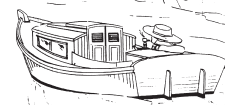
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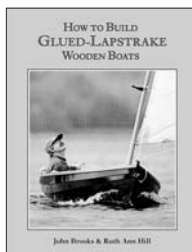
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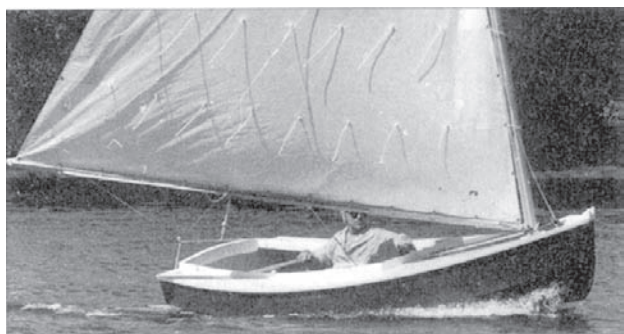
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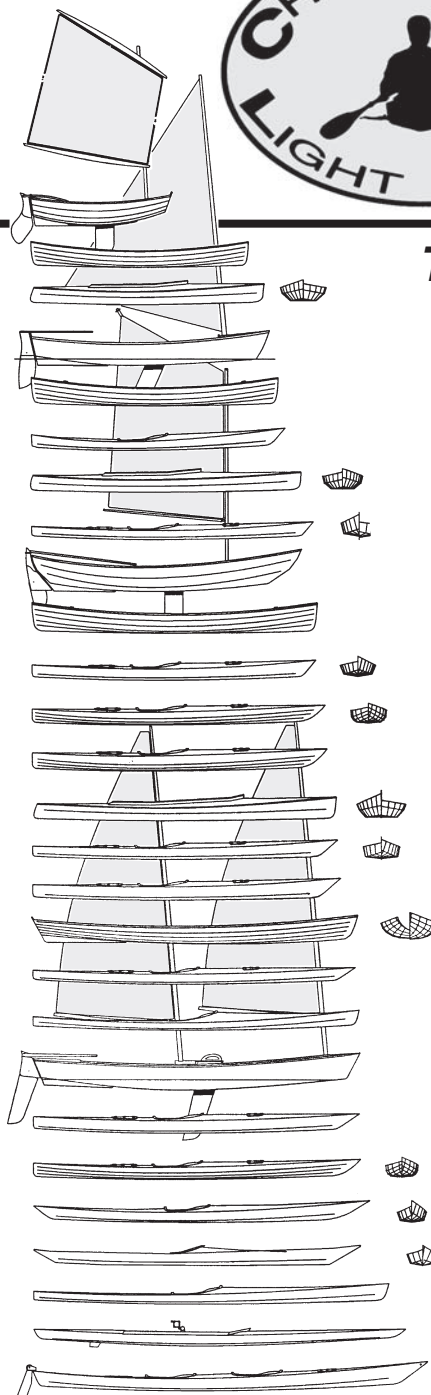
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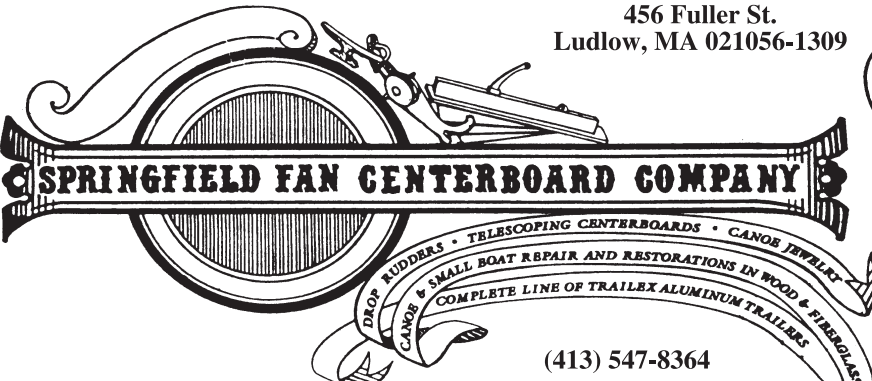
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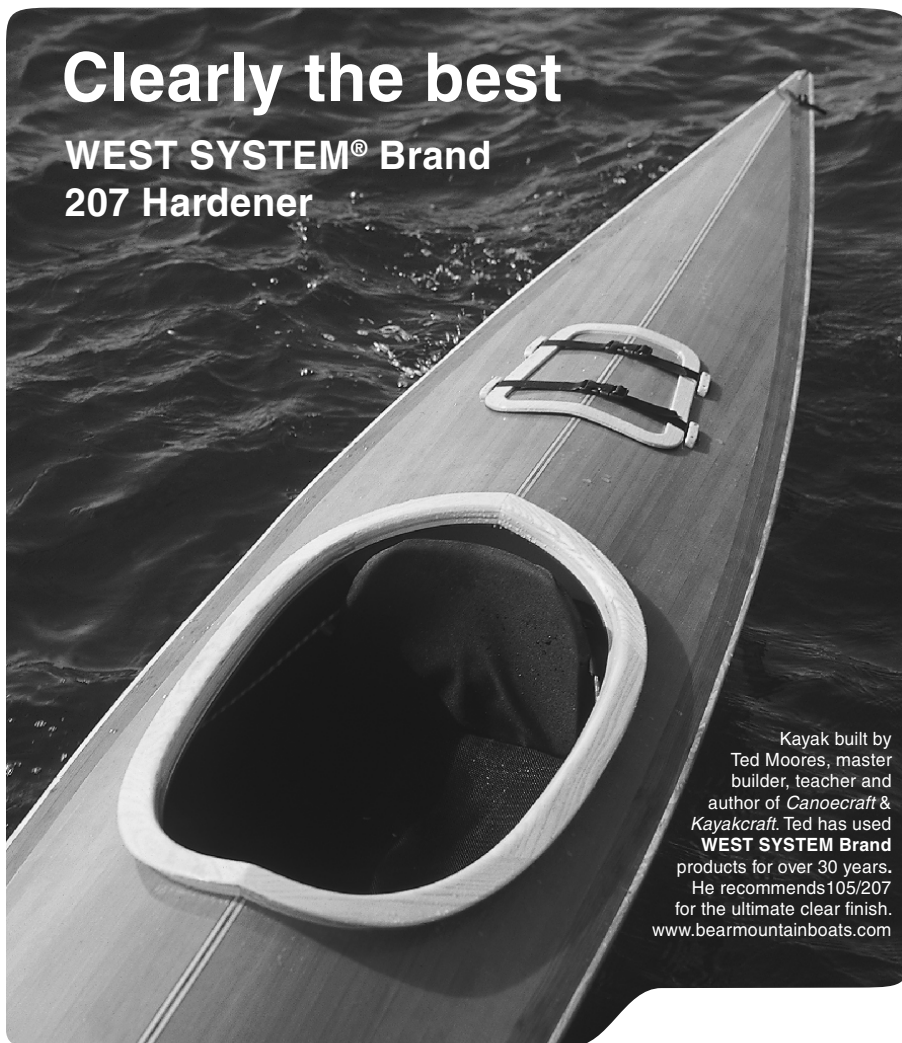
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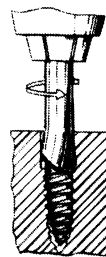
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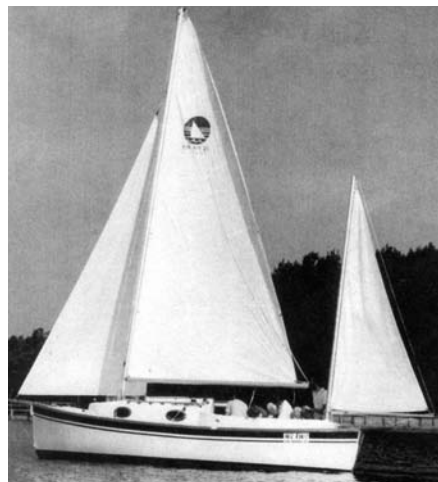
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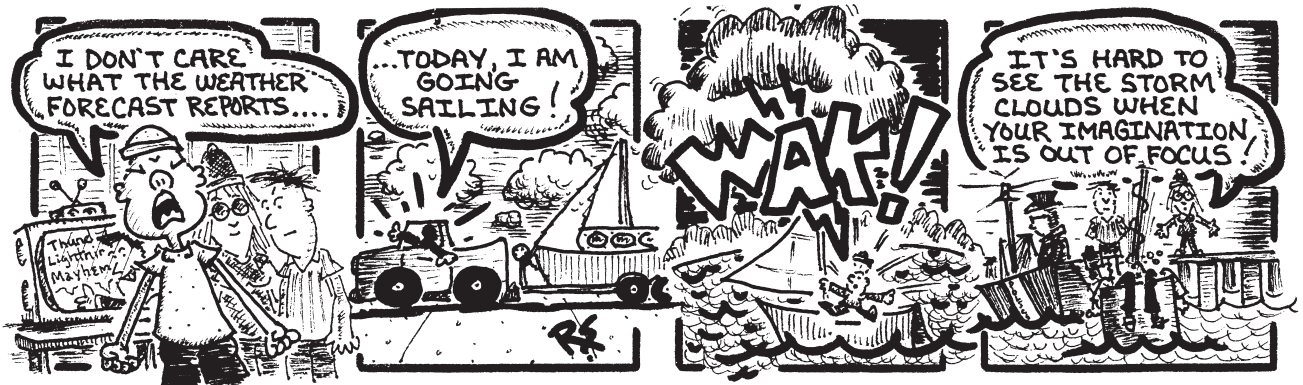
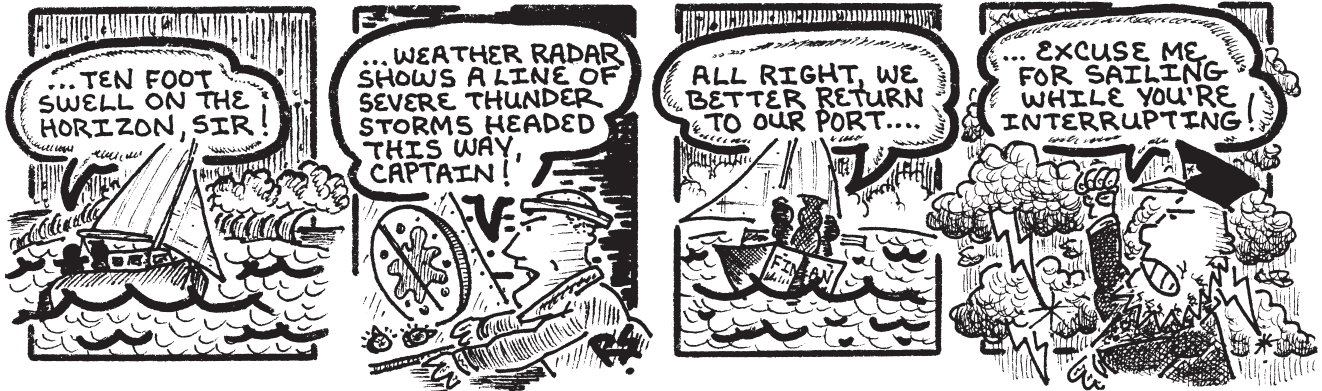
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